



Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office
U.S. Unaccounted-For from the Vietnam War
Prisoners of War, Missing in Action and Killed in Action/Body not Recovered
Report for: Idaho

Military Service	Country of Casualty	Name	Loss Rank	Status	Date of Incident	Home of Record
USAF	Laos	BODAHL, JON KEITH	O3	XX	1969/11/12	BOISE, ID
USMC	S. Vietnam	BOHLSCHIED, CURTIS RICHARD	O3	BB	1967/06/11	POCATELLO, ID
USA	S. Vietnam	HOLLINGER, GREGG NEYMAN	O3	BB	1971/12/14	PAUL, ID
USN	S. Vietnam	HOLLINGSWORTH, HAL T	O1	BB	1968/01/16	GRACE, ID
USA	S. Vietnam	HUNT, WILLIAM B	E8	XX	1968/11/04	SANDPOINT, ID
USA	S. Vietnam	LEMMONS, WILLIAM E	O2	XX	1967/06/18	POCATELLO, ID
USN	N. Vietnam	MAYER, RODERICK LEWIS	O3	XX	1965/10/17	LEWISTON, ID
USA	Laos	SPARKS, JON M	W1	XX	1971/03/19	CAREY, ID
USAF	Laos	THORNTON, LARRY C	E7	XX	1965/12/24	IDAHO FALLS, ID
Report Totals:						
					Total BB - Killed in Action, Body Not Recovered:	3
					Total KK - Died in Captivity, Remains Not Returned:	0
					Total MM - Missing (Civilians Only):	0
					Total PP - Prisoner (Civilians Only):	0
					Total XX - Presumptive Finding of Death:	6
					Total:	9
End of Report						

BODAHL, JON KEITH:

Boise, ID

Synopsis: At 0130 hours on 12 November 1969, then Captain Jon K. Bodahl, pilot and Captain Harry W. Smith, weapons systems officer; comprised the crew of an F4E, call sign "Packard 01," that departed Korat Airbase, Thailand as the lead aircraft in a flight of 2 on a Search and Rescue (SAR) mission. The mission's objective was to recover a 2-man helicopter crew, call sign "Owl 07," that had been shot down the day before.

The location of loss was approximately 60 miles due west of the major communist port city of Dong Hoi, North Vietnam; 1 mile south of Ban Senphan and 15 miles southwest of the Lao/North Vietnamese border, Khammouan Province, Laos. Another description of the loss location placed it 6 kilometers south-southwest of Ban Phanop, 600 meters southeast of Ban Senphan and 300 meters east of Route 23. The Nam Mo River ran parallel to and approximately 1 mile south of Route 23. To the west of the loss location, a tributary of the Nam Mo River branched off and meandered to the south-southeast through the jungle covered valley.

The highest terrain feature within 5 miles of the loss location was 2,300 feet with 6,000-foot mountains to the north, then the mountain range wrapped around to both the east and west. The area in which the downed helicopter crew was hiding was relatively level and densely forested surrounded by villages. In the early morning hours, low stratus clouds collected around the mountaintops. In the valley it was clear with only a slight haze existing in the immediate target area. Visibility was 8 to 10 miles.

The on site Forward Air Controller (FAC), call sign "King 07," directed Packard flight to attack an enemy helicopter operating near the area where the rescue attempt to recover the first of the two downed airmen was in progress. The fighter crews reported sighting the enemy aircraft on two passes, but neither Phantom was able to get an unobstructed shot at it. Flying low over jungle tree tops, they continuously maneuvered to gain an acceptable angle of attack while dodging intense enemy 37mm anti-aircraft artillery ground fire.

Packard flight was forced to break off the attack to refuel from an orbiting airborne tanker. When the flight returned, they were again cleared in to attack the enemy helicopter. This time Captain Bodahl followed his wingman in on the target. At 0455 hours as they pressed through their pass, the recovered crewmen of Owl 07 who was now safely onboard the rescue helicopter, "Jolly Green 09," reported that Packard 01 "seemed to explode in midair" as it continued to draw enemy AAA fire on its last pass. Another report received from a different vantage point stated that "the fighter exploded after either being hit by ground fire or impacting the ground." In the early morning light and confusion of the battle, no parachutes were seen and no beepers heard.

All SAR efforts to rescue the second crewman of the downed helicopter were temporarily suspended while an initial search for the missing F4E Phantom crew commenced. The wreckage of the fighter was found 2 meters south of a ford along the Nam Mo River. Both visual and electronic searches continued throughout the day. No trace was found of Captain Bodahl or Captain Smith. An electronic search continued for several more days, but all proved unsuccessful. In spite of the witness statements, the Air Force believed there was a possibility that one or both men could have survived only to be captured immediately. Because of this, both men were listed Missing in Action.

All during the SAR efforts for Owl 07 and Packard 01, other aircraft under the control of the FAC assaulted communist AAA sites, automatic and heavy weapons positions, and troop concentrations hidden in the dense jungle. US aircraft used bombs, rockets, CBU-22s (cluster bomb units) and strafing runs in an effort to contain the communists' ability to further interfere with overall US operations. These efforts were successful enough that another rescue attempt to recover the second crewman from Owl 07 was attempted. He was successfully extracted; however, in the process of doing so, an A1H was shot down and its pilot, Major Gerald R. Helmich, was also listed Missing in Action.

Jon Bodahl and Harry Smith are among nearly 600 Americans who disappeared in Laos. Many of these men were known to be alive on the ground. The Laotians admitted holding "tens of tens" of American Prisoners of War, but these men were never negotiated for either by direct negotiation between our countries or through the Paris Peace Accords which ended the War in Vietnam since Laos was not a party to that agreement.

BOHLSCHIED, CURTIS RICHARD:

Pocatello, ID

SYNOPSIS: On 11 June 1967, Capt. Curtis R. "Dick" Bohlscheid, pilot; Major John S. Oldham, co-pilot; LCpl. Jose J. Gonzales, crewchief; and LCpl. Thomas M. Hanratty, door gunner; comprised the crew of the lead CH46A helicopter (aircraft #150270) on a troop insertion mission. A total of four aircraft were involved in the mission, two CH46 troop transports and two UH1E helicopter gunship's that were providing air cover for the transports. In addition to being the aircraft commander of the lead Sea Knight, Capt. Bohlscheid was also the mission commander.

Cpl. Jim E. Moshier, LCpl. Dennis Christie, LCpl. James W. Kooi, LCpl. John J. Foley, LCpl. Michael W. Havranek, PFC Charles Chomel and PFC James E. Widener comprised half of Marine Reconnaissance Team (RT) Somersail One, being inserted into a designated landing zone (LZ).

RT Somersail One was on an intelligence gathering mission. Early that morning Capt. Bohlscheid briefed the aircrews on the mission flight plan, while the reconnaissance team waited outside.

The flight of four aircraft departed Dong Ha and proceeded to the southern boundary of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) to an area located in the jungle covered mountains approximately 4 kilometers north of Hill 208, which was identified as the NVA's 324B Division Command Post during Operation Hastings. It was also located 900 meters west of Hill 174, another well known NVA position.

Capt. Bohlscheid first attempted to insert the RT Somersail One west of a landmark known as "The China Wall." The flight pulled away from the briefed LZ when the gunship's, which were clearing the LZ by making low strafing passes over the landing zone to set off any booby traps that might have been placed there as well as to locate any enemy positions, began taking enemy ground fire.

The flight returned to Dong Ha to refuel, rearm and plan a second insertion mission attempt. The second attempt was made directly at the base of The China Wall, but once again it was driven off. For the second time the helicopters returned to Dong Ha to rearm, refuel and evaluate their options.

Because of the heavy NVA pressure in the area and the need to gather current intelligence about their activities, headquarters ordered RT Somersail One be inserted at all cost. The four aircraft returned to the DMZ for the third time in a matter of hours. This time the location chosen was approximately 5 miles northwest of Firebase Vandergrift, 9 miles south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and 11½ miles northwest of Dong Ha, Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.

Before the Sea Knights landed, both gunship's again went to work clearing the proposed LZ. This time no booby traps were sprung and no enemy fire was received. As the Hueys strafed the area, the members of RT Somersail One prepared to initiate their mission once the insertion was completed. Hank Trimble was the pilot of one of the gunship escorts. After clearing the LZ, he stationed his aircraft to the left of Dick Bohlscheid's, and then radioed him to proceed to the LZ.

At 1115 hours, the Sea Knight made its approach. At an estimated altitude of 400-600 feet above the ground, the helicopter transitioned from travel to landing speed. As the lead troop transport did so, other flight members observed it climb erratically in a manner similar to an aircraft commencing a loop. At the same time Capt. Bohlscheid radioed that they had been hit by machinegun fire.

As those aboard the other helicopters watched in horror, portions of the rear rotor blades were seen to separate from the Sea Knight. In almost slow motion, the helicopter's nose rose, then rose more sharply and continued to climb toward the sky until it was nearly vertical to the ground. It rolled to an inverted position then appeared to perform a "split S" maneuver before it burst into flames and continued out of control. Hank Trimble reported that Dick Bohlscheid keyed his mic at the time he was inverted and started to say something, but what came out was a strangled cry, "Mama." The Sea Knight crashed into a steep ravine on the north side of a stream that ran through it.

Ground units subsequently entered the area to search for survivors or recover the remains of the dead if possible. Due to a well-entrenched and equally well camouflaged enemy bunker complex surrounding the entire LZ and crash site, the ground units could only inspect the site through binoculars from a distance of approximately 500 meters. During the brief time available to them, they observed no survivors in or around the aircraft wreckage. At the time the ground mission was terminated, all eleven Marines were listed Killed In Action, Body Not Recovered.

HOLLINGER, GREG NEYMAN:**Paul, ID**

SYNOPSIS: The Beech U21A was a low-wing, twin engine executive aircraft used primarily for liaison flights for staff-level personnel that served with the Pacific Air Forces in Vietnam. The US Army also used it as a personnel and light cargo transport before it was reassigned to Air America, the CIA airline in Southeast Asia.

On December 14, 1971, CW2 Otha L. Perry, pilot; Capt. Cecil C. Perkins, co-pilot; Lt. Col. John Boyanowski, Capt. Gregg N. Hollinger, SP4 Dwight A. Bremmer and SSgt. Floyd D. Caldwell, passengers; were aboard a U21A aircraft (tail #18041), call sign "Long Trip 041." They were conducting an administrative mission from Hue/Phu Bai Airfield to DaNang Airbase, South Vietnam, which was located 42 miles southeast of their base of departure.

The planned flight path was to take Long Trip 041 24 miles due east of Hue/Phu Bai into the Gulf of Tonkin, then the aircraft would make a 90 degree right turn and continue the remaining 19 miles into DaNang Airbase. During the flight, the aircraft experienced an in-flight emergency. CW2 Perry reported to ground control that he had lost his number 2 engine and had a fire. He gave their location and requested search and rescue (SAR) be launched in case they had to ditch. Within minutes after the emergency was declared, both radio and radar contact was lost with the U21A. By the time SAR personnel arrived at the aircraft's last known position, there was no sign of the U21A or its crew and passengers.

Due to inclement weather and poor visibility all search efforts were curtailed. However, extensive searches were conducted for the next three days, over water and the adjacent shore area, but no trace of the aircraft or personnel was ever found. The last known position placed Long Trip 041 approximately 7 miles east-northeast of Hon Son Cha Island, which is located 1 mile east of the tip of the Vung DaNang peninsula, Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam. At the time the formal search effort was terminated, Otha Perry, Cecil Perkins, Jon Boyanowski, Dwight Bremmer, Floyd Caldwell and Gregg Hollinger were listed Missing in Action.

Sixty days after Long Trip 041 disappeared, a case study of the loss incident was completed. After careful review, the board of inquiry determined the aircraft was lost at sea and the crew and passengers died in the mishap. Under the circumstances of loss, it was further determined the remains of all six men were probably not recoverable. At the conclusion of the hearing, the status of Otha Perry, Cecil Perkins, Jon Boyanowski, Dwight Bremmer, Floyd Caldwell and Gregg Hollinger was changed to Killed, Body Not Recovered.

HOLLINGSWORTH, HAL T:**Grace, ID**

SYNOPSIS: LtCdr. Charles Schoonover was a pilot and Ensign Hal Hollingsworth a co-pilot of an RA5C Vigilante aircraft assigned to Reconnaissance/Attack Squadron 9 onboard the aircraft carrier USS Ranger (CVA-61). On January 16, 1966, the two were launched from the carrier on a routine mission.

While the aircraft was airborne, it had mechanical difficulties and crashed at sea. The accident is listed as having been non-battle related. The USS Ranger was stationed about 75-100 miles off the coast of South Vietnam, south southeast of Saigon in the South China Sea.

Hollingsworth and Schoonover are listed with honor among the missing because no remains were found. Their cases seem quite clear. For others who are listed missing, resolution is not as simple. Many were known to have survived their loss incident. Quite a few were in radio contact with search teams and describing an advancing enemy. Some were photographed or recorded in captivity. Others simply vanished without a trace.

HUNT, WILLIAM B:

Sandpoint, ID

SYNOPSIS: William B. Hunt was a replacement platoon leader III CTZ Mike Force (Detachment A-302), 5th Special Forces Group. On November 3, 1966, he was a passenger on a helicopter with an assigned mission in Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam (grid coordinates XT 418 657). During their flight the helicopter was diverted to conduct a MEDEVAC for an American lead company that had suffered heavy losses.

At a landing zone 15 miles north east of Tay Ninh, Hunt was lifted into battle to help evacuate the wounded. He voluntarily left the aircraft to help reinforce the remaining troops (of China Boy 3, a Nung Company of Chinese mercenaries) on the ground, as the MEDEVAC left with the wounded.

China Boy 3 was repelling continuous attacks from superior VC forces. The Viet Cong again attacked China Boy 3's defensive position, but were unsuccessful. The enemy withdrew during the evening of November 4th, but maintained sporadic contact throughout the night. Early the next morning the VC attacked the defensive position in force. While the Company Commander, SFC Heaps, was requesting additional support and reinforcements over the radio, he was severely wounded. Hunt saw this and immediately went to his aide, dressing Heaps's wound and taking over the radio. As Hunt was reporting the current situation he was also shot. The bullet entered his left shoulder, exiting below his right rib cage. Both men fell and passed out, as the ferocity of the VC's attack reached its climax. They were stripped by the enemy and left for dead.

Both Hunt and Heaps regained consciousness and began a tortuously slow movement to a landing zone. Each man would pass out periodically and the other would have to wait while his comrade regained consciousness. Finally Hunt told Heaps to go on without him. Hunt sat down, leaned against a tree, and passed out for a final time. SFC Heaps left one Nung with Hunt and with the second Nung in tow moved to the landing zone for help. The first Nung caught up with Heaps at the landing zone, saying "Hunt dead, Hunt dead". Heaps and the two Nungs were evacuated. But unfortunately, Heaps was unconscious for a day and couldn't help the recovery effort. When a search was conducted to recover the body, Hunt was not found.

In 1985 a private citizen obtained a lengthy report through the Freedom of Information Act in which a Vietnamese defector described in great detail a Prisoner of War camp near Hue, South Vietnam. Together with the report was a list of Americans the source positively identified as being held at the camp. William Hunt's name is on the list. Although the report has been substantiated by returned POW's who were held there, the U.S. Defense Department has declared that the defector is a liar, and his story has been discredited.

LEMMONS, WILLIAM E:

Pocatello, ID

SYNOPSIS: SFC Edward Guillory, Lt. William Lemmons and Maj. James McKittrick were aboard an OH23 Raven helicopter on a visual recon mission operating in Quang Tin Province on June 18, 1967. They were to spot artillery targets for the Artillery Battery that McKittrick and Guillory were attached to.

At 1845 hours, the helicopter was declared missing. Extensive searches were conducted that night aided by artillery flares and aircraft mounted searchlights, but no trace of the aircraft or crew was found. In the next few days several crash sites were reported and searches made, but all efforts were fruitless.

Guillory, Lemmons and McKittrick were classified Missing In Action. There is reason to believe the enemy knows their fates. William E. Lemmons and James C. McKittrick were promoted to the rank of Major and Edward J. Guillory was promoted to the rank of Sergeant Major during the period they were maintained missing.

When the war ended, and 591 Americans were released in Operation Homecoming in 1973, military experts expressed their dismay that "some hundreds" of POWs did not come home with them. Since that time, thousands of reports have been received, indicating that many Americans are still being held against their will in Southeast Asia. Whether the crew of the OH23 is among them is not known. What is certain, however, is that if only one American remains alive in enemy hands, we owe him our best effort to bring him home.

MAYER, RODERICK LEWIS:

Lewiston, ID

SYNOPSIS: LT Roderick Mayer was a pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier USS INDEPENDENCE (CVA-62). On October 17, 1965 he and his Radar Intercept Officer (RIO), LTJG David Wheat launched in their F4B Phantom fighter jet for a day strike mission on the Thai Nguyen bridge northeast of Hanoi.

On the same day, a second Phantom flown by LCDR Stanley E. Olmstead, with LTJG Porter A. Halyburton as his RIO, and a third Phantom flown by LTJG Ralph Gaither and LTJG Rodney A/ Knutson also launched from the USS INDEPENDENCE. These four pilots were part of Fighter Squadron 84, the "Jolly Rogers". Mayer and Wheat were part of the carriers Fighter Squadron 41. All were dispatched to the same general mission area near the city of Thai Nguyen.

The three Phantoms were all shot down within a few miles of each other. Knutson and Gaither were shot down in Long Song Province, North Vietnam, near the border of China, or about 75 miles northeast of the city of Thai Nguyen. Olmstead and Halyburton were shot down in Long Son Province about 40 miles east of the city of Thai Nguyen. Mayer and Wheat were shot down about 55 miles east-northeast of the city of Thai Nguyen, in Long Son Province.

Mayer and Wheat's aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Both men were seen to eject from the aircraft. Search and rescue (SAR) efforts were hampered due to enemy small arms fire. Lt. Mayer was observed over a period of two hours in a prone position, still in his parachute. Before rescue helicopters could reach the scene, both Mayer and Wheat had disappeared from sight and enemy troops were seen in the area. David R. Wheat was confirmed to be a prisoner of war, and when released in 1973, made statements which suggest that Mayer was killed during the ejection or that he died later of injuries resulting from the ejection. He stated that Lt. Mayer did not move, even when he was found by ground troops. Mayer was classified Prisoner of War.

LCDR Olmstead's aircraft was hit by hostile fire and crashed while on a bombing mission. No transmissions were heard, nor was there any sign of ejection by either crewmember. Other U.S. aircraft passed over the crash site and determined that there was no possibility of survival. However, it was later learned that Halyburton had survived, and was captured. Being the RIO, Halyburton would eject first. It was believed that Olmstead had probably died in the crash of the aircraft, but there was no proof of this theory. Olmstead was classified Missing in Action.

Gaither and Knutson were captured by the North Vietnamese, spent nearly 8 years as prisoners and were both released on February 12, 1973 in Operation Homecoming. Knutson had been injured, and was not fully recovered at the time of his release.

The fate of these six men from the USS INDEPENDENCE was not clear at the time they were shot down. Their status changed from Reported Dead to Prisoner of War or Missing in Action. At the end of the war, only Olmstead and Mayer remained missing. Ultimately, they were declared dead for lack of evidence that they were still alive.

Roderick L. Mayer was promoted to the rank of Commander during the period he was maintained missing and David R. Wheat was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander. The final determination in this case, was a declaration of Killed in Action for Roderick Mayer. The EGRESS Report states "died of severe wounds from ejection."

SPARKS, JON M:

Carey, ID

SYNOPSIS: On 19 March 1971, WO1 Frederick L. "Fred" Cristman, pilot; WO1 Jon M. Sparks, co-pilot; SP5 Ricardo M. Garcia, crew chief; and SP4 Paul Lagenour, door gunner; comprised the crew of a UH1C helicopter that was part of a flight of aircraft conducting an armed escort and rescue mission in support of Lam Son 719 into Oscar Eight. WO1 Cristman's aircraft was providing fire support during the pick up of South Vietnamese (ARVN) airborne troops at Fire Support Base Alpha in the jungle covered mountains of Savannakhet Province, Laos.

Fire Support Base Alpha was located in the populated, heavily defended and hotly contested rugged mountains of eastern Laos approximately 4 miles north of Highway 9, 6 miles west of the Lao/South Vietnamese border, the same distance east of Route 92 and 16 miles west-southwest of Tchepone. It was also 21 miles west-northwest of Khe Sanh, South Vietnam.

As an American helicopter was lifting out several ARVN soldiers, it was struck by intense and accurate enemy ground fire forcing it to crash land. During the rescue of that aircraft's pilot by another helicopter, WO1 Cristman worked the area with his minigun while SP4 Lagenour and SP5 Garcia did the same with their machineguns. As WO1 Cristman's aircraft made a second pass over the pickup zone, he radioed the flight leader that his aircraft had been hit by NVA automatic weapons fire and his oil pressure caution light was on and that he was making an emergency landing on the pickup zone.

After he safely landed, SP5 Garcia pushed SP4 Lagenour out of the helicopter before departing it himself. As the rest of the crew exited the Huey, an enemy mortar round hit the roof of the aircraft and exploded. Fred Cristman, Jon Sparks and Ricardo Garcia were knocked to the ground by the concussion while Lagenour maintained his footing and was able to join a nearby ARVN unit located on the edge of the pickup zone. When Paul Lagenour reached the ARVN unit, he was told by one of the soldiers that the other crewmen had exited the aircraft and headed away from the front of it into the path of advancing North Vietnamese forces.

Because of being knocked to the ground, the WO1 Cristman, WO1 Sparks and SP5 Garcia initially stayed near their damaged aircraft. Lead's aircrew verified this fact when they made several firing passes over the pickup zone. Lead was forced to depart the area due to sustaining serious battle damage. Although another helicopter arrived to assist with the rescue efforts, only two ARVN troops were eventually rescued due to the heavy NVA ground fire. SP4 Lagenour later walked out of Laos with the South Vietnamese unit he joined and into a US military controlled area.

In September 1973, a People's Army of Vietnam defector reported his battalion engaged South Vietnamese forces in Laos who were conducting Operation Lam Son 719. The defector stated they captured an injured helicopter pilot who was taken to nearby field hospital B-7. He added that he was told the pilot later died from his injuries. When asked if he had any information pertaining to the other crewmen from the downed helicopter, he said he was also told they were found dead and buried nearby. The defector identified a photograph of WO1 Cristman as resembling the individual captured alive by his battalion.

According to a US government report released during the Senate Select Committee Hearings in 1992, "in March 1987, a private American POW hunter reported a live American in Laos. The background of the purported American correlates to a crewman from this incident." While the government report referenced the survival of one of this loss' crewmen, it did not identify the individual mentioned in the report.

Fred Cristman, Jon Sparks and Ricardo Garcia are among the nearly 600 Americans who disappeared in Laos. Many of these men were known to be alive on the ground. The Laotians admitted holding "tens of tens" of American Prisoners of War, but these men were never negotiated for either by direct negotiation between our countries or through the Paris Peace Accords that ended the War in Vietnam since Laos was not a party to that agreement.

THORTON, LARRY C:

Idaho Falls, ID

SYNOPSIS: The Douglas AC47D, nicknamed Puff the Magic Dragon or Spooky, was a nocturnal savior to American and South Vietnamese troops at besieged outposts deep in Viet Cong and Pathet Lao-held territory. The AC47D had a row of 7.62mm miniguns mounted along the left side of its fuselage and could fly overhead in a pylon turn, bringing torrents of gunfire raining down on the enemy.

When North Vietnam began to increase its military strength in South Vietnam, NVA and Viet Cong troops again intruded on neutral Laos for sanctuary, as the Viet Minh had done during the war with the French some years before. This border road was used by the Communists to transport weapons, supplies and troops from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, and was frequently no more than a path cut through the jungle covered mountains. US forces used all assets available to them to stop this flow of men and supplies from moving south into the war zone.

On 24 December 1965, President Lyndon Johnson announced a weeklong bombing halt over North Vietnam in honor of the Christmas holiday. At 0728 hours the same day, an AC47D gunship, call sign "Spooky 21," departed DaNang Airfield, South Vietnam on an armed reconnaissance/strike mission over the panhandle of Laos. They were to monitor enemy activity moving through this region known to contain several arteries of the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail. The crew was comprised of Lt. Col. Derrell B. Jeffords, pilot; Capt. Dennis L. Eilers, co-pilot; Maj. Joseph Christiano, navigator; TSgt. W. Kevin Colwell, flight engineer; MSgt. Larry C. Thornton and SSgt. Arden "A. K." Hassenger who were both aerial gunners. The planned flight path was from DaNang to the target and back to DaNang. Further, the gunship was due to return to base at roughly 1330 hours.

Weather conditions in the target area included scattered clouds at 500 feet with variable heights to the top of the clouds; 10,000-foot high-scattered patches of ground fog, and stratus clouds that descended into the jungle covered valleys. To the west of the target area, the ceiling of cloud cover was only 1,500 feet high.

Spooky 21 was directed by the airborne command and control aircraft to its primary target that was located approximately 32 miles northeast of Saravane City. As the gunship made its way westward, it was diverted to a second location 18 miles east-northeast of Saravane. Shortly before contact was lost with the gunship at 1050 hours, one of the crew broadcast, "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, Spooky 21" over the UHF emergency frequency. The aircrews of two separate aircraft who were also operating in this sector heard the gunship's final radio transmission.

At 1448 hours, an extensive search and rescue (SAR) operation was initiated. During the entire search effort, SAR aircraft were subjected to intense enemy ground fire emanating from the jungle below. The search was terminated at 1500 hours on 26 December when no trace of the aircraft or crew was found. At the conclusion of the search, military personnel determined the aircraft was downed by enemy action and weather conditions played no part in its loss. At 1530 hours on Christmas Eve 1965, Kevin Colwell, Joseph Christiano, A. K. Hassenger, Dennis Eilers, Larry Thornton and Derrell Jeffords were declared Missing in Action.

The last known location of Spooky 21 was over the rugged and densely forested mountains that were laced with a well-established network of roads and trails of various sizes running in all directions. It was also located approximately 6 miles west-southwest of Ban Solou, 7 miles south of Un Tai, 18 miles east-northeast of Saravane and 36 miles west of the Lao/South Vietnam border, Saravane Province, Laos.

The crewmen of Spooky 21 are among nearly 600 Americans who disappeared in Laos. Many of these men were known to be alive on the ground. The Laotians admitted holding "tens of tens" of American Prisoners of War, but these men were never negotiated for either by direct negotiation between our countries or through the Paris Peace Accords which ended the War in Vietnam since Laos was not a party to that agreement.