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TRANSCRIPT: EXTRACTION OF RANGER TEAM 31

PREFACE:

On the first of August, 1969, a 6-man Airborne Ranger Team (Team 25) from 2d Platoon, C Co., 75th Infantry Regiment (Airborne-Ranger), located and engaged an NVA Regiment in the mountains west of Song Moa in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. In the ensuing battle, 2 Rangers were killed and all were wounded. This was an important battle, not only because of the many NVA regulars who were killed (estimated 50-75), but because it diverted the regiment from its original plans to attack U.S. and ARVN positions along the coast (as indicated in documents captured by Team 25). General Giap was also alleged to be traveling with this NVA Regiment.

Over the several days following this battle, a U.S. Army battalion and an entire ARVN division were deployed in the area. However, while they engaged in several skirmishes, they were unable to relocate the main force of the regiment.

Therefore, U.S. Army Ranger teams from C Company were surreptitiously placed along an imaginary line (about 5 kilometers between each team) between the foothills of the Central Highlands and the coastal city of Song Moa. They had the specific mission of watching for large enemy troop movements and ambushing small patrols for the purpose of procuring documents and battle plans.

One evening near the end of August, Ranger Team 31, ambushed a 15 person patrol, killing 2 NVA soldiers and obtaining (what turned out to be) many important documents. Evidence that the documents were important was suggested by the fact that the NVA soldiers did not leave the area, but doubled back to continue to engage the 6-man team and reclaim the documents.

The following is a transcription of the radio communications between the team, the platoon leader coordinating the rescue operation, and the various aircraft sent in to protect the team until they could be pulled to safety. The following people and their call signs will be heard:

ANGRY BELLS 31 = Team 31. This is team 1 from 3d Platoon, C Company, 75th Infantry Regiment (Airborne/Ranger). This team is located in the foothills of the Central Highlands and has just been fighting off attempts to overrun their position.

SHADOW 61 = This is a C-119 "Flying Boxcar" equipped with flares for illumination (and mini-guns, which were not used in this operation).

NOTE TO EDITOR:

TAKE THIS WORD AT T.O.C. AND SGT LAZAROV TRANSCRIBED IT FOR THE RECORD DURING NOV 70!

SHADOW 46 = This C-119 replaced SHADOW 46 when he ran out of flares and ran low on fuel.

X-RAY 2 = This is a radio relay station in Song Moa. It is set up to ensure good radio contact between the Ranger Teams in the field and the Ranger's operational headquarters located in Phan Thiet. (The audiotape from which the transcription is taken was recorded by the X-RAY team leader. Members of the X-ray team are heard talking together in the background--but their discussions were not transcribed).

ANGRY BELLS 28 = 2d Platoon Leader, C Company, 75th Infantry Regiment (Airborne/Ranger)--1st Lieutenant Rick Grimes. As "Command and Control", his job is to coordinate all the air and ground operations. He is in the back seat of a two-man reconnaissance airplane called an "O-1 Bird Dog". His pilot is not heard on the tape.

ANGRY BELLS 38 = This is the 3d platoon leader located in Phan Thiet at the Ranger's operational headquarters--1st Lieutenant Brian O'Donnell. He is back-up for 28 and is directly in contact with First Field Force Headquarters. He is not heard on the tape because he is out of radio range.

ANGRY BELLS 38 ALPHA = This is the 3d Platoon sergeant. He is riding in a Huey helicopter equipped with a rope ladder. His job is to get the rope ladder out and physically pull the team into the helicopter as they climb up the ladder.

ANGRY BELLS 28 ALPHA = This is the 2d Platoon sergeant. He is riding in the back-up helicopter.

TIGER SHARK 36 = This is the lead gunship (from a team of 2). The gunships are Huey Cobras. They provide suppressing fire around the team both before and during the rescue attempt.

TIGER SHARK 39 = This is the back-up gunship (the second in the team of 2).

WHITE 217 (?) One of two Huey helicopters (slicks) sent to actually extract the team. Besides the pilot, co-pilot, and two door gunners, they are carrying ANGRY BELLS 38 ALPHA, the platoon sergeant for the 3d platoon. He has equipped the helicopter with a rope ladder as he knows the team is located in a heavy jungle canopy and the helicopter will be unable to land.

The first aircraft on site to assist in the extraction of the team was a U.S. Air Force C-119 (Shadow) with flares for illuminating the area. At the beginning of the tape, SHADOW 61 is trying to get visual sighting of the team by asking them to fire a pen-gun flare from their position. The Team Leader is whispering so as not to compromise his position:

ANGRY BELLS 31: 61, 61. This is 31.31. over.

SHADOW 61: Roger 31, this is 61, uh, we'd like you to give us that pen gun, uh, one more flare if you would please.

ANGRY_BELLS_31: This is 31. Where's those gunships at over?

SHADOW 61: 31, uh, They want you to save your pen flares for the gunships. They're on their way in.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, I roger that

ANGRY BELLS 28: 61, 61. This is 28, over. Angry Bells 28

SHADOW 61: Angry Bells 28 ub 61 go ahead

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay, I want all aircraft to go up to Uniform 233 decimal 30. How copy?

(28 asks all the aircraft to talk to him and other aircraft on UHF Channel 233.30. This is done to clear the FM channel so that the team can have a clear channel to talk to him, the gunships and other support)

SHADOW 61: Uh, rodge. You want us off this push?

(push = channel)

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. I want you on the push to talk to the team, uh, but I want inter-aircraft talk on 233 decimal 30.

SHADOW 61: Roger, roger.

X-RAY 2: 31. X-ray 2, go ahead

ANGRY BELLS 31: These people are getting a little close for our comfort. They d-d'ed and now they're on their way back, uh. We're keeping them down right now, uh...They're about (garble) 50 feet in front of us, uh, we're keeping 'em down, but I'd appreciate if you'd get them guns out here.

(guns = helicopter gunships)

X-RAY 2: Uh, roger. They're trying to contact 61 right now. I'll give 61 a call on this station and see if he can put some kind of illumination out for you if you need it, over.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, X-ray 2, X'ray 2. This is 31, uh, do you know [gunfire] (garble) are going to be up to?

(garble)

(garble)

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31, out.

X-RAY 2: Uh, roger, buddy. Just hold on, now, they'll be along in a few minutes.

ANGRY BELLS 31: We're doing all right now. We just gotta get our shit together and get the...get the hell out of here so we can get drunk.

X-RAY 2: You got a good thing going there buddy. Uh, everybody is standby right now. The guns are on their way out there now.

ANGRY BELLS 31: X-ray 2, 31.

X-RAY 2: 31, X-ray 2, over.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, I don't think Charlie is liking our birthday party too much.

(Birthday party = ambush)

X-RAY 2: Uh, roger. Maybe you didn't put out enough candles. Uh, also 28 is in the air. He and 61 are talking together on uniform. He'll be coming up on this station. I hear the guns coming over my location, now. They should be in your (garble) in t-t time, over.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31. This is Shadow 61. Would you like us to drop any flares and illuminate the area, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. Angry Bells 28.

(28 has arrived over the team in a small fixed wing airplane and speaks directly to them for the first time).

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31, go.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. Okay buddy. You'll be coming out be rope ladder. You'll be coming out by rope ladder. I want you to get on there. I want you to link up on that rope ladder. I want the RTO to be the last man up on the left side and the team leader on the other side and I want you to call me when everybody's up so I can get that ship to go on up. Do you roger that?

(RTO = Radio operator with radio)

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. We roger that...going out by rope ladder, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, good copy. Get your Swiss seats on and get them on secure. I don't want to lose anybody on this. Do you roger that?

(Swiss seats = Each team member carries a 6 foot length of rope and a metal "snap link". The rope can be tied around their waist and legs to form a seat. The snap link hooks on the "seat" and can be hooked to a rope ladder or another safety line.)

ANGRY BELLS 31: We roger that...everybody's sitting tight here and (garble) over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. Okay. What's your situation at this time, buddy?

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh. We have no movement around us at this time, but we heard voices just t-t ago, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. Okay. Uh, okay, I'm going to work the gunships out around you. When I come in, uh, we'll get the gunships in there and I want you to have your strobe lights ready to show them.

(The gunships will provide suppressing fire around the team's position to allow the helicopter with the rope ladder to get in safely. The strobe lights will fix the team's position for the gunships and the rescue helicopter.)

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31. 31. 28, uh, get your (garble) strobe lights ready. Get your strobe lights ready. Do you roger that?

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. I roger that. Strobe lights are ready.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, good copy.

SHADOW 61: 28, 31. Do you want us to drop another flare now and keep illuminating?

(garble)

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger that. Keep the illumination on (garble) and we'll let you know(garble)

(Tiger Shark 36 is the "lead gun"--the team leader of two Huey Cobra gunships. While he is requesting illumination to help him make "hot" passes around the team, the helicopter with the rope ladder will also need help in seeing the ground).

(garble)

ANGRY BELLS 31: [gunfire] 28. 28. This is 31, 31, over. We've got gooks off to our front, over!

ANGRY BELLS 28: Say again, 31. Say again.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. Angry Bells 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31, 31. We've got gooks to our front, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Which side? Which side, buddy? Tell me which side. Your "front" doesn't mean anything to me.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28. They are to our, uh, sierra, sierra, over.

(Sierra = south)
(November = north)
(Echo = east)
(Whisky = west)

TIGER SHARK 36: 31, Tiger Shark 36.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31. Angry Bells 28. 36 is trying to talk to you, buddy.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. Angry Bells 28, over.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31, go.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, 36 is trying to talk to you. He's the lead gun. Talk to him, buddy.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31. Go ahead 36, over.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger that. Okay. Go ahead and mark your position. We're having a little bit of trouble down here finding you with...this flare is too bright. So, uh, go ahead and keep (garble) on the strobe light or something.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. 28. Put out your strobe. Put out your strobe, over.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 36, 36. This is 31. That last run was about a hundred meters out!

(The gunship made a pass or a "run" shooting rockets and miniguns about one hundred meters to the south of the team).

TIGER SHARK 36: This is Tiger Shark 36. Okay, where do you want this next run?

ANGRY BELLS 31: I'll adjust the (garble).

TIGER SHARK 36: Say again.

WHITE 354: 61. 61. This is 354. I'm flare for these people. Get out of my way. I'm coming in to drop illumination.

(WHITE 354 is a helicopter with flares, which in addition to SHADOW has been sent in to help illuminate the area. He is flying lower than SHADOW and is concerned that SHADOW will drop flares on his helicopter).

SHADOW 61: Roger, we're...(garble)

WHITE 354: (garble)...approximately 5 point...Don't drop anything on me. I'll get pissed.

(WHITE 354 is at 5,000 feet) .

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28. 31.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead 31. Go ahead. I'm listening, buddy.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Okay, babe, uh. We (garble) a ship (garble) get us now. We had a couple rounds fired back before. We're getting some A-K fire now, babes, so I want you to work these guns out good. And I'll give you directions and I'll (garble) working from there. I want these guns close. They might be a little closer than I want 'em, but I got my people down and there's no sweat.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, you have to have constant illumination. I want a strobe light and if you've got enough pen flares, I want another pen flare. Do you roger that?

(Concurrently with what is heard on this station, 28 is talking to all the aircraft--Shadow, Tiger Shark, White--on a UHF channel. Tiger Shark is complaining to 28 that he keeps losing sight of 31 on the ground. 28 is telling 31 to provide constant illumination).

ANGRY BELLS 31: Roger that, 28. We're going to put a, uh, strobe...We're going to put a pen gun flare out.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay, uh, 36, (garble) pen flare.

(garble)

TIGER SHARK 36: (garble)...strobe light... Keep the illumination going so we put it in where you want it. Is that affirmative?

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28. 28. These people are getting damn close.

TIGER SHARK 36: (garble) Roger, we're coming in...(garble)...if we can see you, we can shoot it up babe.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 28. Go ahead.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Okay babe. That was a real fine show. We got some people firing back at us, but I think the people got 'em that time.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, good copy. 36. Make one more pass same-place.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Same place! Same place! Same place! Same place!

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)...want one more round down that way and I might change positions a little.

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble) 28. 28. (garble)

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead 21. Go ahead 31. Go ahead.

(garble)

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)...losing this game now.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Say again 31. Say again clearly. Slow down and say again.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, 28. 31, go.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. Okay. Say again slowly what you want, buddy.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Okay, I want, uh, I want them to make that last run now (garble) and we'll change the position.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay. Make that last run and you'll adjust from there.

(28 repeats most of 31's transmissions to ensure it is understood by all aircraft).

ANGRY BELLS 31: Roger that, uh...These people are running around us.

TIGER SHARK 39: 31, This is 39. Put your head down.

ANGRY BELLS 31: ...Uh...I want it from my, uh...I say again...if transmission, that's a negative. I want it to my east...east to west...(garble)...

TIGER SHARK 36: (garble)...copy. Go ahead and fire that pen flare at this time and we'll be right in on you.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Roger, that. Keep these out about about 35 meters, because that's where these people are.

TIGER SHARK 36: Need some illumination!

SHADOW 61: 36, This is 61. How about a light-(garble)?

ANGRY BELLS 31: Cease fire! Cease fire! Cease fire! Cease fire! 36, cease fire!

(garble)

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble) from our position. Them last rockets came in about 15 to 20 meters from us.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger that, okay. You're going to have to shoot that pen flare straight up then, because we got a little bit off...okay, we got 'em this time. I understand down the slope, down to the sierra. Is that correct?

(31 complains that the last run was too close for their comfort. 36 suggests that it was because the angle of their last pen flare made it appear that the team was further away).

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)...fire it straight up...

TIGER SHARK 36: I understand to the sierra five-zero meters?

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31, this is 28, over.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. That's right on target. Right on target.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger, that.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. 28.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31, 90.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay, buddy. Those gooks off your back now?

ANGRY BELLS 31: Say again, over. We could not understand, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, Are those gooks off your back now? Can we bring that lift ship in there and get you out be rope ladder?

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, This is 31. I think you said you want to get us out, right? over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, as soon as possible.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31, uh, we couldn't understand you there, either, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay, buddy. I want to get you out as soon as possible. Can we get the rope ladder in there at this time. over.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. That's a roger. We think you can get the rope ladder in at this time, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, good copy on that.

SHADOW 61: Shadow 46. This is 61.

SHADOW 46: Roger. What's your altitude?

SHADOW 61: We're at 6 point 5.

SHADOW 46: Say again?

SHADOW 61: 61 is at 6 point 5.

SHADOW 46: Roger, 6 point 5. We're coming out at 7 point 5.

(SHADOW 46 is flying out to relieve SHADOW 61. They exchange altitudes. 61 is flying at 6,500 feet. 46 is at 7,500 feet).

SHADOW 61: Roger (garble) at this time.

UNKNOWN AIRCRAFT: ...airborne and should be home at maybe two-zero, two-five minutes. I'm inbound at this time about one-five out.

SHADOW 46: I'll be standing by.

SHADOW 46: 28. We're not too optimistic, though. This cover looks awful thick.

(garble)

(garble)

SHADOW 46: Shadow 46.

(SHADOW 46 expresses concern that cloud cover rolling in from the Central Highlands will interfere with their illumination and with the extraction of the team).

CANOE 17: This is Canoe 17. We've got some (garble) on standby right now. As soon as you people clear out of the area, we can something in there. How about a good grid, over?

(CANOE 17 is an artillery base near Song Moa. They are offering artillery support if someone can give them a good location on the map).

SHADOW 46: Roger, standby one.

ANGRY BELLS 28: (garble) 31...Angry Bells...

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31, 90.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay buddy, uh...I want you to have a strobe light or as many strobe lights as you can (garble)...the slick will be coming in...

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. Wait one.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Okay, I say again (garble). Strobe lights, strobe lights. Many many strobe lights...(garble)

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. That was a gunship that was over us.

TIGER SHARK 36: 31, 31. This is 36. I know that but we're going to need a light so the slicks can shoot for you. Do you understand that?

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, we, uh, roger that. Our strobe light is working at this time. over.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger, okay. I've got your strobe light. Also, you got a flashlight (garble)?

ANGRY BELLS 31: That's a negative. We don't have a flashlight, over.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger. Just keep that strobe light going. We'll have the slick come on in.

TIGER SHARK 36: 31. Go ahead. Keep that strobe light going. The slick is coming in at this time.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. Keep that strobe light, buddy.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. Keep...we will.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. 28. 28. This is 31. over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead. 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, you want all six up...all six of us to ride the rope ladder out, right? We... (garble)

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger on that. I want three on one side. Three on the other side. I want you to talk to me on the radio when all six of you are linked up. I'm going to tell that ship...ship to get up off the ground. Do you roger that?

~~with whom I had not been in touch since 1981 until a few days ago~~

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. We roger that, over.

ANGRY BELLS 38A: 28, 28. This is 38 alpha, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead 38 alpha.

ANGRY BELLS 38A: This is 38 alpha. That ladder is only on the left door...not on both doors, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay, break, break. 31, 31, 28.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31, 28.

On learning that the helicopter is rigged on only one side, 28 tries to contact 31 with new instructions).

TIGER SHARK 36: 31, This is 36. That slick's coming in right at you so get ready.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31, 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: You're in the wrong place, 28. You're in the wrong place, over, over..... Farther up, farther up, 28..... Keep it coming....

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay...keep it...okay...Be advised the rope ladder has only got one side. I want all six of you to scramble up that one side. Do you roger that?

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)!!!

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)!

ANGRY BELLS 31: Bring the chopper over this (garble)...! Come on out here, Rich..... Come on. Come on, 28....Come on...More.... Over this tree, here.

TIGER SHARK 36: 31, Tiger Shark 36. Is he right over you?

ANGRY BELLS 31: Over this one big tree, 28.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, over one big tree. Okay, give him, uh, direction, buddy.

ANGRY BELLS 31: No, farther over 28. (garble).... Keep it over....(garble)..... The north side of the tree! The north side of the tree, 28!.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, the north side of the tree. The north side of the tree.

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble) 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Drop the rope ladder, now.

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble) tree...

ANGRY BELLS 28: Drop the rope ladder. Drop the rope ladder.

ANGRY BELLS 31: It's caught in a tree!... 28, 28. It's caught in a tree..... I cannot get the rope ladder, 28. It is in a tree, in a tree.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, I understand the rope ladder is in a tree.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28, it's stuck up in a tree....

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, I understand its stuck up in a tree. Okay, buddy. We'll try to get it out.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Take it up. Take the ship up. Take the ship up. Take it up..... Up...up...Okay. Get that ship out of here for awhile. [gunfire].... Get it out of the tree....Now bring the ship back.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28. This is 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead, 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: The rope ladder was in a tree.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. The rope ladder was in a tree. Okay. He's going to try it again. He's going to come in...He's going to try to get it right on top of you this time. All six of you scramble up that one side.

(The helicopter reports to 28 on UHF that he is going around again and will try it from a different angle. While the helicopter is hovering over the team, the helicopter is extremely vulnerable to enemy fire. For this reason, the team knows it has to hook up quickly, while the gunships make passes to suppress the enemy fire).

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28. This is 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble) to the north of our position...That big tree that you was at...there's a little open space. You can get the ladder in there over.

(31 thinks 28 is riding the slick with the rope ladder. 28 doesn't correct him because it is irrelevant to the operation. The helicopter coming in can hear the team's instructions and 28 is repeating them).

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. Okay, uh, open space to the north of the big tree that the ladder was stuck in...Okay. Good copy.

ANGRY BELLS 31: ... (garble) We'll have the strobe light right where we want it...right where we want the ladder, we'll have the strobe light, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. I understand, you'll have the strobe light right where you want the ladder, uh, rope ladder is monitoring.

TIGER SHARK 39: (garble) Tiger Shark, 39.

SHADOW 61: 39, This is 61, go ahead.

TIGER SHARK 39: Roger, 61, (garble)...more flares...It's getting dark down here.

SHADOW 61: Rodge. We're cutting loose 2 at a time. You want more?

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)...chopper coming...

TIGER SHARK 39: Yea, the last one's about ready to go out. You better get down there or else we're going to get stuck.

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)...come on...

SHADOW 61: Rodge. We just let two go. We'll let some more go right now.

ANGRY BELLS 31: More...more...more...Come on...

ANGRY BELLS 31: Bring the rope ladder down now! Bring it down! Bring the ladder down 28!

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. The rope ladder is coming down.

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)...over to your left more...to your 9 o'clock...

Bring it down 28...bring it down...!!!

TIGER SHARK 36: Drop the ladder...

ANGRY BELLS 31: ...down...we got it...bring it down... [gunfire] (We got gooks...!!!.We got....).... We got the rope...(garble) bring it down...bring it down...Bring....[gunfire]...It's caught in a goddamned tree again...take it up...!!!

ANGRY BELLS 31: Get out of here..!!!!. Get out of here... We got gooks! ...We got gooks..!!! ...Get out of here, now! (garble)

(The team and the helicopter start receiving enemy fire while the team tries to get the rope ladder. The assistant team leader grabs the radio from team leader and tells the helicopter to leave).

ANGRY BELLS 38A: 28. This is 38 alpha, over.

SHADOW 61: Okay, 46. This is 61. Do you see where we're dropping flares?

SHADOW 46: Roger 61. We've got you spotted.

SHADOW 61: Okay. We've got three flares left. Get ready to resume our flares for us...

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28. This is 31, 31 over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead, 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: We were taking fire...on that, over...

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. Okay. Good copy...break. 38, 38. Get me another set of guns out here. Get me another set of guns out here, asap.

(Feeling that the situation is deteriorating, 28 asks headquarters for a back-up set of gunships. The gunships are running out of ammunition; all the helicopters are running low on fuel).

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Is there any other means you can get us out besides rope ladder, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Negative on that, buddy. Negative on that. We'll get you out be rope ladder. We'll try it again.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28. This is 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead, 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh...Be advised...I don't think that rope ladder is long enough.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger on that...break...break...28 alpha...28 alpha...This is 28, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 28 alpha, 28 alpha, 28, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger...Have we got a McGuire Rig on that ship...

(garble)

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger...

ANGRY BELLS 38A: (garble) This is 38 alpha. Advise 28 that it can only pick up three men on that McGuire Rig, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, on that 28 alpha...Okay...31, 31. This is 28 you going to have to come out by rope ladder, buddy.

(Learning that the rope ladder may not be long enough to reach down through the trees, 28 asks the 2d platoon sergeant--riding in the back-up helicopter--if he is equipped to pull the team out by McGuire Rig. A McGuire Rig consists of 3 mountain climbing-type ropes affixed together and lowered from the helicopter with a sandbag. The rope ladder only extends about 40 feet. The McGuire rig about 100 feet. This is particularly dangerous as only three team members can be pulled out at a time by one helicopter, while the rope ladder can pull all six.)

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31, 28.

TIGER SHARK 36:...Tiger shark 36.

TIGER SHARK 36: Shadow 61, Tiger Shark 36.

TIGER SHARK 36: Shadow 61, Shadow 61. Tiger Shark 36.

SHADOW 61: Tiger Shark 36, 61. Go ahead.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead 31... (garble)

TIGER SHARK 36: ...we're going to need more illumination

SHADOW 61: Uh, rodge. We got another Shadow standing by. He's got a flare load. He's moving in now and he'll be dropping them all over the place.

TIGER SHARK 36: Okay. We just lost our flares down here, buddy, and we don't got any light.

SHADOW 61: Bodger We just kicked out 3 more

TIGER SHARK 36: Gray real fine

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31. Stand by. That White lead's coming in again with that rope ladder.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31, go.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. Okay. He's going to try again with that rope ladder, buddy.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28. This is 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. I say again...He's going to try again with that rope ladder. He's going to try again with that rope ladder. Stand by...

TIGER SHARK 36: (garble) Shadow 61. Tiger Shark 36.

ANGRY BELLS 31: ...tell him to (garble) go off...to go off if we receive fire again over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger...No sweat on that, buddy.

ANGRY BELLS 28: You just keep talking (garble)...You just keep talking to that ship.

TIGER SHARK 36: Shadow 61. Shadow 61. Tiger Shark 36.

SHADOW 61: Tiger Shark. This is 61, go ahead.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger that. Okay. Bring your flares 4 clicks to the west. I say again 4 clicks to the west.

SHADOW 61: Roger...4 clicks to the west.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger, that...You adjusted pretty far out over there...(garble)

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, 28. This is 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead, 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31, uh, we have (garble) down here. We're not going to leave them over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay. You bring out what you can, but you can drop those rucksacks. Take your radio with you.

TIGER SHARK 39: (garble) This is Tiger Shark, 39.

SHADOW 46: Roger, Tiger Shark 39. Shadow 46.

TIGER SHARK 39: Uh, roger that. Keep all those flares right where the one you've got going now is and you'll be up tight.

SHADOW 46: Roger. We see strobe lights on the ground. That's the area you want us to keep illuminated?

TIGER SHARK 39: That's right. Keep it light (garble) if you can.

SHADOW 46: Roger. We'll do our best.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Shadow 46. This is Angry Bells 28. Go up Uniform 233 decimal 30.

(28 is angry because SHADOW 46 and TIGER SHARK 36 keep talking to each other over the FM channel and interfering with the Team's communication with him and other rescue aircraft).

ANGRY BELLS 31: ...get us, over...

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. They'll be in there in t-t time...t-t time. They're just putting out some more flares.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31, 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. Okay. They'll be there in t-t time...they're dumping out some more flares...You keep that strobe light going.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead, 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Keep those flares right where they're at, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, I understand. Keep the flares where they are.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead, 31.

TIGER SHARK 39: 31, 31. Tiger Shark 39.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Break out Tiger Shark, for right now, uh, 28, 28. We're moving about 25 meters to our November. There seems to be a better hole in the canopy, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay. You're moving 25 meters to your November. Okay, Make a (garble) and move with caution, uh, we're trying...(garble)...with the rope ladder at this time.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 35. This is 31, over.

TIGER SHARK 39: This is Tiger Shark 39. Roger, we're having a, lot of trouble (garble) weather, and I'm about out of fuel. We're going to have to get this thing on the road and get out of here right quick.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 31. We're ready to leave at any time you are, over.

TIGER SHARK 39: Okay, uh...You got your strobe lights (garble)...?

ANGRY BELLS 31: That's a roger. We got our strobe lights working now, over.

ANGRY BELLS 31: ...got our strobe lights working now, over.

TIGER SHARK 39: Okay. He'll start in on you now.

TIGER SHARK 39:this is Shark 39, uh, aircraft is inbound at this time.

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)...is 31...we roger that, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 28.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, 31, go.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, okay when this ship comes in, you give him directions, uh, November, sierra, echo or whisky...Don't tell him just "in front of the tree", okay?

ANGRY BELLS 31: Uh, I roger that, over.

TIGER SHARK 39: 31. This is Shark 39. Do you have the aircraft in sight.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. Not at this time, over.

TIGER SHARK 39: Okay. He should be pretty close to you. He's down on top of the hill. (garble)...if you can, move him by sound.

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31. I'm going to pop a pen gun flare, over.

TIGER SHARK 39: Roger that...(garble)

SHADOW 46: Tiger 36. Shadow 46.

TIGER SHARK 36: Go ahead.

SHADOW 46: Roger. We saw his pen gun flare right under where we launched our last flare.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger that.

SHADOW 46: That's south of the area that we see the other choppers.

TIGER SHARK 36: Uh, roger...(garble) moving in...

SHADOW 46: Looks like we're down to about 11 flares. That means we've got less than...dropping them singly, we've got less than 35 minutes.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger, that, babe. If we can't get them in the next ten minutes, we're going to be out of gas anyhow.

SHADOW 46: Roger...

TIGER SHARK 36: (garble)... Tiger Shark 36

ANGRY BELLS 31: The gunships there. The gunships coming towards us.

TIGER SHARK 39: Uh, roger that...uh...

TIGER SHARK 36: 46, Tiger Shark 36.

SHADOW 46: 36, This is 46.

TIGER SHARK 36: Roger that. What's your release altitude at this time.

SHADOW 46: We're at 4000 feet.

ANGRY BELLS 31: To your November... November... November-whisky... November-whisky... keep coming twelve o'clock... twelve o'clock... twelve o'clock... twelve o'clock...

TIGER SHARK 36: ... (garble) ... drop your flares ... you got a (garble) up above that's pretty (garble) ... go ahead and drop them...

ANGRY BELLS 31: Drop rope ladder! Drop rope ladder!

ANGRY BELLS 31: ... at this time... keep the ship (garble) a little more, a little more (garble)...

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31. Talk to him! Talk to him!

WHITE 217: This is slick ship. Go up both sides of the ship!

TIGER SHARK 36: 31, 31. Come up both ladders.

(As the 6 team members scramble up the rope ladder--which is lowered out only one side--the pilot starts to lose control of the helicopter and must push his stick to the extreme right as the weight of the team pulls the helicopter to the left. Also, the pilot apparently does not know the rope ladder is only on one side and requests them to come up both sides. However, as the team is pulled in by 38A--with help from the door gunner--they are pushed to the other side of the helicopter and the pilot is able to regain control).

ANGRY BELLS 31: ...31. Take it up. Take it up.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, you got everybody on there 31?! All right. Bring it up. Bring it up. Bring it up.

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28, This is 31....so far everybody's just fine.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. I understand you got everybody 31?

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28. You did a real fine job, babe. I'll buy you a beer when you get back.

ANGRY BELLS 31: (garble)

ANGRY BELLS 31: 28! We got two k.i.a.'s.

TIGER SHARK 36: 31. Understand you have (garble). Is that affirmative?

(There is confusion because the lift ship reports to 28 --on the UHF Channel--that they only have four on board; 31 reports that he has 2 k.i.a.--killed in action. Thus, it seems, that 31 has lost 2 men).

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31. 31. 28!

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31. 31. 28!

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31. 28!

ANGRY BELLS 31: This is 31, 31, over.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Go ahead, 31.

ANGRY BELLS 31: Tell Tiger Shark 36, 39. They did an outstanding job!

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger. You got all your people? You got all your people?

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 28.

TIGER SHARK 36: 31, Tiger Shark 36.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31, 28.

ANGRY BELLS 28: 31, 31, 31, 28.

TIGER SHARK 36: Angry Bells (garble)...

ANGRY BELLS 28: I can't determine whether they've got all 6 or not. They told them to lift and they had 4 on there and had 2 k.i.a., but that's all I know at this time. They're taking them to Sierra Mike.

(Sierra Mike = Song Moa)

TIGER SHARK 36: 28. Tiger Shark 36, fox-mike.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger,...(garble)...Tiger Shark.

TIGER SHARK 36: 28. This is Tiger Shark. Okay. You've got all 6 people back there.

ANGRY BELLS 28: Roger, that! They got all 6! Real fine job! Beautiful! I'm...

I want to shake your hands when I get back... Good job... Good

(As it turns out, the lift ship reported 4 on board because he could only see 4. Four had scrambled on board while the team leader and the radio operator linked themselves to the ladder outside the helicopter. Also, as he dangled from the rope ladder(!), the Team Leader said he had 2 k.i.a., which could have meant his own losses).

POSTSCRIPT: An analysis of the documents captured by Team 31 showed that the previous operation by Team 25 had severely affected the NVA regiment. They had not left the area, as earlier believed, but had broken down into smaller units and scattered into the mountains to await replacements and supplies.

Also, after a debriefing of the team and all the people involved in the successful extraction of the team, several operational changes were made so that some of the preventable problems would not occur. There were new "Standard Operating Procedures" added to the existing ones: Among other things, all lift helicopters were equipped automatically with McGuire Rigs and rope ladders were always set to go out both sides of the helicopter. Pilots learned to stay off the FM channel unless they were talking to the Ranger Team Leader; and there was more contingency planning during briefings with pilots and teams before they went into the field.