

MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 364
Marine Aircraft Group 16
1st Marine Aircraft Wing FMFPac
APO San Francisco, California 96302

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5750
3 November 1970
Ser 03A30870

[REDACTED]
From: Commanding Officer
To: Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group 16
Subj: Command Chronology for period 1 through 31 October 1970

Ref: (a) WgO 5750.4
(b) GruO 5750.1

Encl: (1) Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364 Command Chronology

1. In accordance with the provisions set forth in references (a) and (b) enclosure (1) is hereby submitted.
2. Downgrading Instructions. Group 4, UNCLASSIFIED upon removal of enclosure (1).

HMM-364

W. L. Becker
W. L. BECKER .
Acting

HMM-364 S & C FILE
Control # 0-576-70
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OCT 1970

3 November 1970
Ser 03A30870

MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 364
Marine Aircraft Group 16
1st Marine Aircraft Wing FIFPac
FPO San Francisco, California 96602

COMMAND CHRONOLOGY

1 October 1970 to 31 October 1970

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Enclosure (1)

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DECLASSIFIED

5 November 1970

Ser: 03A30870

When, at 1830 on 30 October, the flight crews of MHM-364 were recalled they had amassed a total of 58.5 flight hours and had rescued 983 people.

The effort put forth in the rescue was commented upon by the CG III MAF in his 022151 Nov 70 message in which he stated; "the many individual acts of heroism should be justly rewarded. I am justifiably and extremely proud of Marine Corps Aviation".

The "Purple Foxes" maintained an average aircraft availability of 12 and an aircrew availability of 18 during the month. The high pilot flew 37.5 hours for the month and the high crew chief and gunner flew 77.2 and 84.6 hours respectively. 218 Air Medals and seven Air Crew Wings were awarded.

PART III

SEQUENTIAL LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

9 October 1970: During a med evac mission, aircraft 155354 received six hits while in a zone, knocking out the supervisory panel. The crew departed the zone without further incident.

10 October 1970: The crew of aircraft 154020 was on a resupply mission enroute to LZ 425 when the #2 fuel control failed. Thereupon the pilot shut the engine down and returned to Marble Mountain Air Facility.

12 October 1970: Three forward blades and one aft blade were damaged when the pilot of aircraft 154838 hit some wires in the zone while on a night med evac. The number one engine of aircraft 154020 had a compressor stall. The pilot who was on mission 73 (Rocan) aborted and flew the aircraft back to Marble Mountain Air Facility.

18 October 1970: The pilot of aircraft 153354 was on a resupply mission to hill 270(S) when he took three hits in the aft transmission. Due to the loss of pressure, a precautionary landing was made at PSE Res.

20 October 1970: Returning from a night med evac mission, the pilot of aircraft 154798 was on a short final when the hydraulic oil cooler failed and the #2 boost pressure was lost. The pilot landed without further incident.

21 October 1970: The pilot of 154026 was on a med evac mission when he took one hit in the forward rotor blade.

23 October 1970: The pilot of 154020 landed safely after it lost its #1 engine during a hover check.

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24 October 1970: During a troop extract, the pilot of aircraft 153347 damaged the aft rotor blades when he hit a tree in the LZ.

27 October 1970: Two incidents and one accident occurred. Aircraft 154830 crashed and burned on hill 270(S) when the aircraft was shot down while on a med evac mission. The pilots of aircraft 154027 and 154815 received hits in the fuselage and aft pylon while flying low level on med evacs. The pilot of 154815 was forced to make an emergency landing.

28 October 1970: During a turn-up to check the blade-track of aircraft 154042, it went out of control and crashed in the revetment.

29 October 1970: The pilot of aircraft 153349 was on mission 80 when an air burst resulted in five shrapnel holes in the belly of the aircraft severing the IFF antenna.

30 October 1970: Aircrafts 153349 and 153376 each received one hit when returning from the emergency evacuation of flood victims. The pilots were flying low level when aircraft 153349 had its junction box hit and 153376 was hit in the co pilot's side of the aircraft. Aircraft 154026 received two hits one in the nose and the other near the left stub wing while the pilots were flying med evac missions.

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 The following day, the 20th of October, MH-364 had an accident when an aircraft went out of control in the chocks and turned over on its side. The aircraft suffered substantial damage but the crew got out unharmed.

Because of the heavy rains that occurred during the last part of the month, a tremendous rescue effort was flown for three days by the "Purple Foxes". On 29 October, mission 83 afternoon crews launched to rescue 400 Vietnamese stranded due to rising flood waters. In IFR weather without gunship support, these crews rescued Vietnamese civilians who otherwise might have drowned.

Things were getting progressively worse by the morning of 30 October. The low areas up to 20 miles south of Danang were devastated by the flood. American servicemen, Korean Marines, ARVN soldiers and thousands of Vietnamese civilians were in serious danger from the uncontrolled deluge. Every available aircraft was diverted to the disaster areas. During the entire day, rescue operations were hampered due to low ceilings, poor visibility and enemy ground fire. The "Purple Foxes", with full knowledge of the inherent dangers of the operation flew without the use of gunships or navigation aids. It was a tremendous effort of both pilot and crew.

Another incident was illustrative of the events of 30 October occurred when 1stLt CRAMOND and 1stLt THOMPSON hovered precariously close to nearby trees and a church steeple to pull 16 children from the roof of a church south of Hoi An. With the aircraft's main mounts on the tile roof of the church, crew chief LCpl BROWN, laying on the lower hatch door, helped the children into the aircraft.

During the late afternoon and into the waning daylight of 30 October, Major Van Locwen and LtCol STREMPER, working in the area where the raging Song Vu Gia emerges into the coastal plains, participated in a daring rescue of many stranded and flood bound civilians. After sighting the frantic flood victims, the aircraft was put down on a water covered road. Although the road was considerably higher than the surrounding terrain, the water was of sufficient depth to cover the MH antenna and disrupt normal communications with U.S. ground units. Seeing small children in immediate danger of drowning LCpl MITCHELL, the crew chief, jumped into the swirling waters and effected several saves. He was shortly followed into the water by the two aerial gunners, GySgt THOMPSON and Sgt BRENNY. For the next two and a half hours, these marines were almost constantly in the water effecting rescues.

During the day, hundreds of people were rescued. Some of the crews never left their aircraft for seven hours because there was so much work to be done.

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PART II

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The "Purple Foxes" of HMI-364 flew 1096.7 hours during the month of October. This effort represented 1321 tasks for 4130 sorties including the transport of 10,258 passengers/troops and 242.6 tons of cargo. One hundred and ninety five missions were flown in support of two hundred and forty four casualties. These casualties represented 84 emergency, 53 priority and 107 routine evacuees.

The "Purple Foxes" received fire twenty six times during the month and had over thirty hits in their aircraft. All during the month operations were hampered by poor weather, which made it necessary for the "Purple Foxes" to fly low level many times to complete their mission. This low level flying undoubtedly accounts for the numerous fire incidents and hits reported by HMI-364.

On the morning of 13 October, a Vietnamese army truck loaded with civilians and ARVN soldiers was stalled on Liberty Bridge. Rising water and swift currents prevented any rescue from the ground. 1stLt LARRIE was directed to the scene where he descended amid power lines to try to pick up the entrapped people. Because of the winds he could not hover the aircraft so the people could enter through the rear ramp. Realizing the urgency of the situation, he turned the aircraft so the evacuees could enter the side door. During this time the aircraft rear wheels and ramp were under water and the blades close to the wire. His actions undoubtedly saved these people.

On the 27th of October, HMI-364 lost it's first aircraft of the month due to hostile fire. 1stLt DENTON the pilot, and 1stLt RIERSGARD, the co-pilot of the duty med-evac chase aircraft were on short final to hill 270 (AT 999315) South when their aircraft came under heavy fire. In a few short seconds they had an engine shot up with resultant fire/power loss and the aircraft crashed into the hillside. Their aircraft broke into two parts and burned. In a heroic effort the Marines on hill 270 helped rescue the crew of the downed aircraft. The entire crew suffered minor injuries and the aircraft was a total loss. During this time, Major VAN LEEUWEN, the pilot of the lead med-evac aircraft was directed to the scene to evacuate the casualties. Ignoring the danger of exploding .50 caliber ammunition and the hostile area around the downed aircraft, he proceeded to rescue the crew.

On the same day as the above enemy action, 1stLt BERON and 1stLt THOMPSON were on a med-evac mission when they received fire and had numerous hits. Proceeding back to Marble Mountain Air Facility, they were forced to make an emergency landing. 1stLt BERON and his crew chief did an excellent job of getting the aircraft safely to the ground under adverse conditions. Because of this no further damage resulted.

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PART IV

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- ✓ 1. CG III IAF Message P291800Z Oct70
- ✓ 2. CG FIRST IAW Msg R310551Z Oct 70
- ✓ 3. CG III IAF Msg P022151Z Nov 70

Enclosure (1)

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291800Z OCT 79

FM CG III MAF

TO RUMUNPA/CG FIRST MAW

INFO RUMUNPA/CG XXIV CORPS

RUMHDNA/CG MR ONE

RUMUMHA/MAG SIXTEEN

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CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE

1. I HAVE NOTED WITH A SINCERE SENSE OF APPRECIATION AND ADMIRATION YOUR QUICK REACTION TODAY TO TWO EMERGENCY MISSIONS. ALTHOUGH OPERATING IN EXTREMELY RETARDED

PERSONNEL WEATHER CONDITIONS, YOU SUCCESSFULLY AND SAFELY EXTRACTED WOUNDED VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL. ALL WERE IN EXTREMELY PRECARIOUS SITUATIONS CREATED BY SURFACING FLOOD CONDITIONS.

2. IT IS ALWAYS REWARDING TO NOTE EXHIBITIONS OF COURAGE COUPLED WITH COMPASSION AND HIGHLY CAPABLE LEADERSHIP. THE VIETNAMESE WILL NOT SOON FORGET YOUR HEROIC DEEDS.

3. TO THE PILOTS AND CREWS OF COMPRISE, DINNER AND THE

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PURPLE FOXES MY PERSONAL WISH WOULD BE FOR A DINNER WITH YOU AND YOUR CREW TO RECOGNIZE

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291800Z OCT 79

TO CG III MAF

FM RUMMHPA/CD FIRST MAW

INFO RUMMHPA/CD XNIV CORPS

RUMHDNA/CG MR ONE

RUMMHPA/MAG SIXTEEN

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PURPLE FOXES MY PERSONAL WOULD BE FOR THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE AND THE ACCORDANCE

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RESPONSE TO FLOOD DISASTER
 DURING THE AFTERNOON OF 29 OCT 70, AREAS IN THE VICINITY OF DANANG BEGAN TO FLOOD WITH HEAVY RAIN. THROUGHOUT THE TWO DAY PERIOD, WINDS WERE HOWLED AT 100 KNOTS. WAVES WERE BUILDING TO 40 KNOTS, AND VISIBILITY WAS REDUCED TO LESS THAN ONE HALF MILE IN RAIN. IN SPITE OF THESE CONDITIONS, THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT THAT IS...

PAGE TWO RUMUMPAD177 3082 151-0
 CONDUCTED MANY EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS. AIRCRAFT LANDED AFTER MIDNIGHT. SURVIVAL ONLY WHEN FORWARD VISIBILITY HAD DROPPED TO ZERO. MANY HELOS RECOVERED AT MAF BY GCA.

2. BY MORNING OF THE 30TH, THE INCESSANT RAIN BROUGHT NEW TRAGEDY TO THE LOW AREAS FROM DANANG TO SOUTH OF THE GAIN CLOUD RANGES COVERED BELOW SEA LEVEL. IN THE RAIN OFTEN RESTRICTED TO LESS THAN ONE MILE. THIS TIME THE FULL CAPACITY OF HAD IS NOT CALLED UPON REMAINS CONSTANTLY HIGH. FREQUENTLY SUBJECTED TO HEAVY SMALL AREA. CREWS REPORTED THAT OVER 9000 PEOPLE WERE... MANY OF THESE LIVES UNOCCUPIED... NOT BEEN EVACUATED.

ON 31 OCTOBER... CONTINUED THE EVACUATION... WORLD AND VIETNAMESE... AND THE EVER PRESENT THREAT OF INDIAN... INSURGENTIE, YOU PRESSED FORWARD WITH AN INCREASING...

OF THESE RUMUMPAD177 3082 151-0
 20,000 POUNDS OF REEDED SUPPLY AND FOOD WERE CARRIED THE
 THE MANY...
 MIATOM...