

2/20/89

Dear Don,

My apologies for the delay in my reply to your request of 1/15/89. My wife and I were able to get away to the Caribbean for awhile, etc.

Also, I'll be unable to attend the Pensacola reunion as my National Guard unit (I'm still flying those things) has its "summer camp" at that time. I certainly hope to be at the next reunion though.

Regarding the events of 7/13/68, you've probably already found that Bill Soto is not the "Soto" who was the pilot of our wing aircraft. Last I heard, Octavio Soto (a Cuban by the way) was in Virginia Beach and probably retired from the Navy.

Soto, myself (as copilot), Lyle Nimmo and Buddy Record were the crew of the wing

aircraft in that flight. Det
1 was flying off the Harnett
County at that time. We
generally anchored a few
miles north of the northern
tip of Cu Lao Dung (or
Shit Island as it was called)

About 6:00 P.M. on the
13th we headed out for a
normal patrol with Abrams
and his crew as FTL. We
saw an Army gun team headed
west from Dung Island towards
Soc Trang and asked them
what was up. They said there
was supposed to be a "Cadre
meeting" or some such going
on somewhere on Dung Island.
We checked in with the
Naval Advisor at Sai Nga. (sp?)
along the west bank of the
Bassac. He assured us through
his "Jupiter" that there was
a meeting at such & such
coordinates and we were cleared
to kill anybody who looked
suspicious - you remember how
that went. We then patrolled

the area the Advisor had suggested was suspect and found one lone individual (male adult) in a sampan trying to find cover. John Abrams said to enter a right hand circle at about 500 feet and let the door gunners do their thing. I swear that as soon as that guy in the sampan breathed his last breath (we had started a climb up to 800 feet or so to observe, etc), a .50 caliber opened up on us and Abrams reported "receiving fire". Later reports on the aircraft (that we recovered the following day) said they took at least 6 rounds right up the tail pipe. We were about 800 when Abrams was hit (they never hit us and we were only slightly aft). We sat there and watched his rotor blade stop completely at that altitude. Seconds later they crashed like a "free falling safe". There was ^{no} doubt that all

aboard were dead. We put out
the Mayday and in a short
period of time the Hornet
County was moving toward our
area and we had 6 Army
gunships with us. We just
stayed hoping there was some
chance there might be survivors
and to try and pinpoint the
crash site (heavy vegetation, so
we never could see the aircraft
from the air). We returned to
the Hornet County for fuel and
Soto gave his seat to Dave
Minahan (our Seawolf 19 then by
the way) - I was not an
AHAC yet. Soto was going to
help lead a SEAL Team in by
foot - the Seals were on their
way from Binh Thuy in a Boston
Whaler. Minahan, myself, Nimmo
Rees and I flew for a number of hours
after that along with Army guns
until the SEAL Team was at
the crash site. We had a Spooky
dropping flares later which was
always a treat with good day like
vision and then the sudden dark

making night vision orientation difficult.

The SEALS stayed all night and the next morning we extracted the bodies and the aircraft by Chinook. The aircraft was eventually sent to Corpus Christi where we got the report about at least 6 rounds up the pipe, etc.

If you (or we) find Octavio Soto, he could no doubt add a fair bit about being with the SEALS and spending the night at the crash site. Our Det Oin C was Bill Harker and his name is on the Seawolf roster. His address is 3860 Barden Rd., Pensacola, 32503. I haven't talked with Bill for 20 years (it is hard to believe isn't it?) he may be able to add a bit as well.

Your efforts as historian are much appreciated. Hope my account is of some help to your records.

P.S. My address:

Best Regards,
Chuck Bagley