

SCARY NITE

By
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Long ago and far away... here we go again!

It was one of the unusually "quiet" nites in the "Rear". One team in the bush, lagered down, ambush position, no movement. The C.O. and Opn's NCO, John Barnes, and I were going to solve the problems of the world. Not many places to go when all's quiet and you hope for the best.

Because we monitored the radio calls from the 1/9 Cav, we heard the activity. "Got a Bird down!!!" The Cav had an operation going on down on the Son Be River AO. All our ears perked up and we plugged in to the FMs. Seems as if a "Charlie" model got shot down during an operation. All hell was breaking loose! Bad terrain, lots of ground fire, the makin's of a real fight.

We listened and the C.O. CPT "P" said, "Get some stuff together." Barnes and I looked at each other and took off. John went to the supply tent to grab gear. I went to the hooch to roust out the guys that CPT "P" had told me to round up. Up and at 'em, saddle up, lock and load, and stand by!

CPT "P" hustled to the Squadron HQ and "Volunteers" the Rangers. We prepare for a "Recovery". We had not done that before!!!! We have our McGuire Rigs, a team of three. The C.O. will round out the team. He looks at me and says, "Sgt. Regan, you are our Jumpmaster!" Off we go on the mule, with all the gear, lots of adrenaline, and probably too much bravado!

We reach the pad and I begin to "rig" the bird. The Crew Chief tried to hurry me. I brush him off and slow down. Rig the bird, check my rappellers, talk to all and ensure that we know what the heck is going on.

The rigging goes

well, the ropes are not the usual rappelling ropes, but the "daisy chained" McGuire extraction ropes in sandbags. I already knew that twists would slow the rappel.

Lift off! I have my usual web gear and 20 mags, 10 frags, and a Car 15. The team is "lite", no rucksacks, but heavy on small arms. Along with my PRC 25, I have my (previously requisitioned) flight helmet, plugged into the bird's freqs, et al. I hated to have surprises while flying!

As we are inbound to the AO I give the team sitreps. The chatter on the FM is unreal, "Cavalier ---, I'm taking fire!!! Rolling Hot!!! Back to Papa Victor to refuel and rearm." I looked out the right door as we approach the AO and all I see are NAV lites. Gunships rolling hot!!! Green tracers!!! Everyone who has a helicopter gunship is AIRBORNE and SHOOTING!!!

Then I monitor a call on the Cavalier "Push", "THE RANGERS ARE HERE AND GOING IN ON THE BIRD!!! GIVE THEM COVER!!!" The entire world erupted with miniguns, rockets, and door gunners going crazy around us.

As we hovered over the downed bird, rockets cooked off and green tracers reaching for us, the Ol' Man gives me a thumbs up, I put him and the other Rangers on the skids, and off they went ...into double canopy, at nite, burning wreck below, gunships firing 360 degrees!!! PUCKER FACTOR!!! The rappel progresses... the pilot gets anxious, the Ranger RTO keeps me posted on the progress of the team.

Too long over the AO... green tracers still seeking us out! One line "slack"... two lines "slack" three ropes "slack"! Pilot gets "goosey" starts to LIFT/pull pitch! "NO, NO" I slap him on the helmet with my "K" bar! "NO NO!" The RTO calls and we have a guy hung up. I cut the rope and the slick bounces into the air!!! All the guys are safe and sound on the ground.

Commo is good, AO is secured. Three bodies are recovered. A long vigil securing the crash site begins. The fourth body is found/recovered when the team moves around the crash site. The Blues go in on the area at First Light. Team is extracted. End of TALE??? NO way!!!

Prior to this night, there had been many, many episodes of confrontation, aggravation, and even animosity between the Rangers and the Troopers of the 1/9, Real Cavalry. 'Til this day, there is a bond between our units that is to be envied by other Combat Units. That nite, the Rangers literally "Hung it out!" for the Troopers of Charlie Troop 1/9 Cav.

OK, who went down the ropes with the captain? Let's hear your side of the story.