

A SLICK STORY

By Jim Regan

Okay, here goes: The day and date are not important. We had lifted off from Phuoc Vinh on a VR (Visual Recon) for two Teams from the 1st Plt. We were going South towards An Loc AO and did a good VR of both AOs, selecting LZs and PZs. Lots of canopy and trails.

VR Completed we headed back to PV. We were hanging out in the bird and I heard unusual chatter on the intercom (I always had a flight helmet plugged in to the net on the bird). The Crew Chief was going ballistic! "What's up?" We just sheared the pin on the tail rotor he shouted! Don't mean much to me. Then he says that we should get ready to crash and burn! That got my attention. He gave me a quick class and told me that if we maintained about 80 knots we could fly "Straight" and maybe not crash.

I got on the PRC25, called in to the TOC: "Slashing Talon 65, this is Slashing Talon 15, be advised we are going down approximately ten click south of your location, OUT!" Did it as if I was giving a weather report. I grabbed the two TLs and told them about the problem. Get yourself together, and be ready to unass this bird! As I looked out the door, nothing but canopy, nothing that "looked like" an LZ!

The Pilot was going "nuts" with his transmissions, May Days etc to PV.

We had managed to fly "Straight" for a while and I saw the strip at PV thru the canopy. It looked like the "Keystone Cops". Fire Trucks, checkered flags and all sorts of FLAs (Front Line Ambulances) running around the strip.

Hang on was the WORD! The door gunner and Crew Chief had the M-60s unhooked and the ammo wrapped around their necks. The TLs had their gear in their hands and the pilots had the "chicken plates" pulled back from their door and their seatbelts unbuckled.

Here we go!!! We came in to the strip, PSP (Perforated steel plate) at about 80 knots. The sparks were a flying as we slowly settled and touched down on the strip at about 80 knots! A fire truck was keeping pace with us out the right door. It seemed an eternity 'til the bird slowed. It slowed then tilted forward ever so slowly and I knew the blades would strike the ground! Didn't happen! The bird was almost tilted all the way forward and seemed to stop.

When the bird reached the forward most part of the tilt, we all exited the aircraft as a "glob", before the bird began to settle back down, towards the rear! We had all, me, the TLs, Door Gunner, Crew Chief, and both Pilots had evacuated the aircraft as if we were shot out of a cannon.

As I exited the A/C all I could think of was the strike of the rotor blades. I hauled ass straight out the right side, bent over and "booking!!" Bam!! I had run smack dab into the side of a fire truck. Bounced back and sat on my duff.

Checked and saw that all had made it out and the slick just sat there rocking back and forth with the rotor blades winding down.

Next on the scene is SSG John BARNES, OPS NCO, driving like a mad man across the strip on a "Mule" waving something in the air as he flew across the airstrip headed towards us.

He pulls up, all grins and throws a pair of fatigue trousers at me saying, "Thought you might want to change your pants Sgt Regan!"

End of another day in the "Vacation Land of South East Asia." Jim RLTW

OK, who were the team leaders on this flight?

FOLLOW-UP TO JIM REGAN'S "A SLICK STORY"

Just wanted to let you guys know I was on that chopper, too. I wasn't a team leader though. I was an ATL. The TL and ATL for each team were along for the overflights. I sat on the port side of the bird with my TL. The TL and ATL for the other team sat on the other side.

Hate to admit it, but I'm not sure who my TL was then, but I think it was either Steve THOMPSON or Bob LARSON, and I'm thinking it was Thompson.

As for the other team, I'm clueless. But Jim, I can vouch for the veracity of your tale. Can't remember you running into the fire truck, but I was moving too fast to notice details.

Barnes attempt at comic relief was a good one, though, and I remember laughing my ass off.

Bruce JUDKINS