

SWORN STATEMENT

OF

CAPTAIN TILFORD W. HARP

22 MILITARY AIRLIFT SQUADRON

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA

16 MAY 1975

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Travis Air Force Base, California

11. **(Place)**

16 MAY 1975

(Date)

I, Captain Tilford W. Harp, hereby state that
Colonel Bernard A. Waxstein, Jr., [redacted] has identified himself to me
as C5A Collateral Investigation Officer USAF.
(Special Agent AFOSI, Security Police, Office, Spanish)

(Special Agent AFOSI, Security Police, Other-Specify)

I do hereby voluntarily and of my own free will make the following statement without having been subjected to any coercion, unlawful influence or unlawful inducement. I am Tilford W. Harp, Captain, [REDACTED], 22 Military Airlift Squadron, USAF. I was assigned to the 22 Military Airlift Squadron, Travis Air Force Base, California, on 1 September 1973. I have approximately 1577 hours total flying time in the USAF and 539 hours total flying time in the C-5 aircraft. My crew qualification as of 4 April 1975 was First Pilot and my crew position upon departure from Saigon, Vietnam at approximately 1600 hours, 4 April 1975, was that of copilot.

We arrived at Clark AB, R.P. at 1437L on 3 April 1975 on aircraft 80218. We were given a 12 hour release against a possible mission into Saigon on aircraft 218. Following dinner at the Officers' Club, we (all the officers) went to bed at 1900L and were awakened at 0300L with an alert on aircraft 80218 going to Saigon with return to Clark. We showed at Operations Center at 0400L with normal flight planning and eating at the Snack Bar by the Operations Center. We were told at this time (0600L) that we would be taking an aeromedical crew into Saigon to bring back some orphans. We were told we would have to wait until the crew of nurses, medical technicians and medical supplies arrived prior to departure. At approximately 0700L we arrived at the aircraft to find that maintenance was still being performed on the copilot's windshield and the No. 2 engine. Maintenance was completed at approximately 0800L, but we were still waiting on extra blankets, food, juices, etc., for the orphans for the return flight. During this time, we asked for additional life rafts, oxygen equipment, and a special security team to go with us to Saigon. We also asked for the Infra Red Kit to place in the troop doors for going into Saigon, a possible high threat area. All items were refused due to not having them available, not enough, etc. Everyone realized the humanitarian importance of the mission from higher headquarters and the mission proceeded. At approximately 0900L, we were called by Ops Center to come inside and wait, that there was a holdup in Saigon, that Saigon was not ready for us. We went inside and were immediately told to turn around and go back outside and make an ASAP departure. We departed Clark at 1013L with an uneventful flight to Saigon at FL310. Captain Traynor was in the left seat, I was in the right seat, Captain Malone was in the jump seat. We landed at Saigon at 1253L. During the flight to Saigon, we discussed the offload and onload at Saigon. Captain Traynor stressed the importance of professionalism and security at Saigon since we knew there would be several camera men present. Also, on the flight to Saigon, part of the crew changed the crew baggage from downstairs into the crew rest facilities.

After arrival at Saigon, we taxied to parking on Taxiway 18, and shutdown engines and proceeded with the offload of the howitzers, Sgt Engels (engineer) and I remained on the flight deck to monitor the Auxillary Power Units and the radios. Following completion of the offload, we proceeded with the onload. The onload was very disorganized. My description of the onload as being disorganized reflects on the ground assistance at Saigon, not on the aircrew or medical crew. The aircrew and

medical crew did an outstanding job of getting us loaded in our ground time and making an on time departure. To me, the onload seemed disorganized due to a lack of coordination on Saigon's part. The passengers were not ready to load, there were no stairs to load the passengers, the passengers' baggage had not been palletized, etc. Compared to normal MAC operations, coordination was definitely lacking at Saigon, but it can probably be explained by the volatile environment. The Defense Attache Office was not able to supply us with accurate manifests, but told us there was an accurate master copy of the passenger manifest on file. The only manifests that I saw were given to Captain Melton (who gave them to Sgt Snedegar), and Captain Melton gave me the impression that not everyone had been manifested. I believe the DAO representative had mentioned this to him. Someone downstairs during the onload mentioned that it was no problem because the orphanage (or some agency) had accurate manifests. At one time or another, everyone helped with the onload of babies, women and children. Another aeromedical crew had joined us at Saigon, and the med crews and flight crew did an outstanding job of getting everyone seated and strapped in. I might mention that during completion of the onload I was on interphone, and observed a normal closing of the aft doors through interphone communications. By observed, I meant what I heard over interphone. The load master had indicated all lights were out on his panel, the doors were closed, and then requested that I go to SAFE with the aft door switch, which I did. We still had the door open light on the annunciator panel, but this was due to the Crew Entry Door still being open. All indications over interphone sounded normal.

Jillford W. Haig
We made a maximum power rolling takeoff at 1603L with no problems. All procedures were accomplished in an orderly and professional manner. We climbed at 200KIAS until approximately 16,000 feet and began a slow acceleration to 270 Kts indicated airspeed. We discussed the possibility of going at FL370 due to bad weather off the coast of Saigon, but due to oxygen requirements in case of a rapid decompression, we decided to proceed to Clark at FL330. We proceeded on course to Vung Tau radio beacon. Approximately 3 minutes past Vung Tau, passing FL230, and around 260 Kts, a loud bang was heard followed by fog in the cockpit. I immediately donned my oxygen mask and checked in on interphone, followed on interphone by the troop compartment. Whenever the requirement to don oxygen equipment is apparent, each crew position is required to check in on interphone that his respective crew position is on oxygen. For example: "copilot is on oxygen." I checked in on oxygen, and the troop compartment (TSgt Doughty) checked in saying they were on oxygen and everyone was okay. A few seconds later, the troop compartment told us about the injury to SMSgt Perkins.

I turned on the No Smoking, Fasten Seat Belts switches as we began a slow descending left turn back to Saigon. I attempted to tell Saigon Control of our problem, but my microphone was cutting in and out. Captain Langford, the Navigator, took control of the radios and got out a transmission to Saigon, and then Captain Malone, in the jump seat, took the radio and made all the radio calls from that point on. The Engineer had notified us we had lost hydraulic systems 1 and 2 and I was noticing the lights on the overhead panel when the pilot remarked that he was unable to bring the nose of the aircraft up. I looked at the pilot, and he had the control wheel to his chest (as was mine), and we were still rapidly descending. I forcefully shook my control wheel with no response, and tried the trim switches on the yoke and the manual hydraulic pitch trim lever, all with no results. At this time, we pushed up the throttles and the airplane began a climb with airspeed rapidly decreasing. We rolled to the right and pulled back the throttles and started to descend. At this time, we realized the only way to control the aircraft was with power. I yelled at the engineer to get us a hydraulic system for the flight controls. He said that we

had 3 and 4 systems. This rung a bell in my mind, and I then selected Right Inboard Elevator System No. 3 at about 20,000 feet but with no results. We were getting vectors back to Saigon from our Navigator. During the descent, we discussed what we had and what we didn't have. At approximately 10,000 feet we began putting the gear down. The forward main gears came down normally, and I emergency extended the nose gear and the aft main gear. At about 8 miles from the field, we began a shallow left turn to Runway 25L at approximately 4000 feet and 230 knots airspeed. The pilot was flying power, and I was flying ailerons since it took both of us to handle it. As we started our turn, the nose began dropping very low and we applied power with a descent that began to rapidly accelerate. I saw a wide open field with some water in front of us. and I rolled wings level just as the pilot stated something to the effect of land straight ahead. We had full throttles applied trying to break our rate of descent, and I can remember seeing nothing but ground rapidly approaching in the windshield. All I could think to do was hold the wings level and hope for the best. Just prior to impact, the pilot retarded the throttles to idle and I hit the flap handle down hoping to pitch up the nose. We impacted the ground relatively smooth and went skidding through the swamp and bog. Suddenly we were airborne again and passed over the Saigon River. We impacted a second time extremely hard and the airplane began to break up and the lights went out and the windshields were blacked out with mud. We began to roll to the right and soon came to a stop. I popped my lap belt open and exited out the pilot's side window. The helicopters arrived in a matter of minutes and we began to assist with the rescue of the injured. I was taken to a first aid station for injuries to my legs, then bussed to the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital in Saigon for x-rays. We were then taken to the Gray House in Saigon for billeting, and we departed for Clark the next day on a C-141, arriving at 1845L.

JWH

31. I further state that I have read this entire statement. Initialed all pages and corrections, and signed this statement, and that it is correct and true as written.

WITNESSES:

Tifford W. Hare

(Signature)

22 MAS, Travis AFB CA

(Address)

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a person authorized by law to administer oaths, this

16th day of May 1975

at Travis Air Force Base, CaliforniaBernard A. Waxstein

(Signature of Person Administering Oath.)

BERNARD A. WAXSTEIN, JR., Colonel, USAF
C5A Collateral Investigation Officer

(Type Name, Grade & Title of Person Administering Oath.)

STATEMENT

OF

CHRISTINE E. LEIVERMANN

2 JULY 1975

STATEMENT OF CHRISTINE E. LEIVERMANN

APRIL 4, 1975

A. PICKUP AND TRAVEL OF CHILDREN FROM ORPHANAGE TO TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT

Most of the children departed from our nursery by bus. The smaller children were transported to the airport in cars through the courtesy of some American women. We departed for the airport in convoy fashion. We waited several minutes at the check point into Tan Son Nhut. The usual formalities were completed...looking over the papers, Vietnamese police boarding the busses to survey the occupants, looking at the baggage, etc. From the check point we traveled on to the airport. The children waited in the vehicles while the papers were being completed with the Vietnamese authorities.

B. LOADING OF PASSENGERS & BAGGAGE ON THE C5A

By the time I arrived on board the airplane, most of the passengers and baggage were already boarded. Most of the older children and many of the adults were downstairs. A few small children were with different members of our organization who were also scheduled to take the flight that day. I asked a crewman where the majority of little ones were concentrated, and he directed me to the upper deck of the airplane. I went upstairs and helped strap children into their seats. Many of the smaller children were strapped 2/seat, so I went around trying to straighten them out a bit and make them more comfortable. There were a number of other things to do, such as removing the children's travel packs and placing them out of the way, adjusting leg braces so they wouldn't block the area between the seats, and handing out baby bottles. I said goodbye to friends that had helped load the children and were now disembarking. Then I went downstairs to check on supplies. While downstairs, I noticed that most of the people were concentrated in the forward section of the plane. The luggage appeared to be strapped to a section behind the stairs. The rear loading door was still open. People were going about their business, and I didn't notice many familiar faces. I took some spare baby bottles upstairs and instructed some crew-members on what to give the children to drink. Then I returned to the section of babies near the stairwell and concentrated on making them comfortable.

There were a number of people upstairs, and many of the adults had no place to sit for takeoff. As we prepared to takeoff, I mentally reshuffled children in an arrangement that I thought would offer maximum care for the children and seats for the adults. I planned on asking one of our (FFAC) nurses to come up and help once we were airborne.

C. RECOLLECTION OF EVENTS FROM TAKEOFF THROUGH RAPID DECOMPRESSION AND SUBSEQUENT CRASH LANDING

Everyone had picked their station and had prepared for takeoff. A crewman asked me if I knew how to brace for takeoff--I said "Yes", and he went back to his station a few rows ahead of mine. My position consisted of the first 2 rows directly in front of stairwell, the short row next to the stairwell, and assisting with the row next to the emergency exit doors. My position for takeoff was between the 1st and 2nd row in front of the stairwell. After the plane had leveled off, I began to give out more baby bottles and collect the empties in my station. I took the empty bottles back to the galley and waited in line to fill them with sugar water. Someone handed me a carton of milk, and I had just finished it when there was a tremendous explosion. Someone said, "Oh my God, my Jesus God, no!". I believe that a black crewman injured his leg at this time. After a few seconds, I stepped over and around the debris that had accumulated in the galley after the explosion and went back to my station. I looked down the stairwell and saw a large body of water. I assumed the plane was going to drop into the ocean and started thinking about the fact that neither the children nor myself could swim. A crewman came up to me and put his arms around me and asked if I was all right, and if I was scared, and if I would be all right. I answered Yes to all 3 questions. He explained that the cargo door had blown off and that we would probably land all right because it's happened before and the planes usually landed okay. Some crewmen were off to my left (as I faced stairs) and appeared to be handling a radio or something similar. Someone said the wiring was gone. Then the O₂ masks fell from the ceiling. I only found 2 that worked in the first row. When I pulled on the tubing to start the flow of O₂, the unit came out of the ceiling. When I straightened the tube and gave only a gentle tug, no O₂ came through to the mask. The tubes were not long enough to reach the babies in their seats. I put on one mask and had to unstrap the babies and lift them up to the O₂. This proved to be extremely awkward, so I finally decided to just give it to the babies that looked like they were in greatest need. Many babies seemed to be borderline unconscious, but one was turning cyanotic, so I picked him up and held him to the O₂ until the crewman signaled that O₂ was no longer needed. The time involved seemed to be about 2 minutes, but I am in no way positive about this. I remember looking to the forward section of the plane and seeing everyone giving O₂ to the children. I don't know if they had the same problems with their O₂ masks.

After the O₂ was no longer needed, we began strapping and padding the children more securely in their seats. I occasionally turned to look down the stairwell. The air was much warmer, and the wind was causing scraps of paper to float around the stairs. The land was rising up

C. Continued

quickly, and I could see rivers, rice paddies, houses, etc. The crewman came up to me again and asked if I was okay. I answered Yes. The rush of air seemed to be getting louder now as we neared the land. My babies were all very still and quiet. Most of the adults were hovering over their charges and preparing for landing. We started to brace for landing. I was still securing my children, and I could see people crouching between seats, some of them trying to shield children with their arms. I crouched between rows 1 and 2 in front of stairwell and braced. The plane touched down and seemed to bounce back up in the air and come down again. Some part of the plane broke off, and started on fire-(I don't know whether the break or the fire was first) possibly the wing. Some flames came up the stairwell and were followed by intense heat. I started to feel very panicky as I couldn't reach all the children at once. But the plane kept sliding forward and left the burning wreckage and the intense heat behind us. During this time, I was bounced around a bit, the life raft inflated, some seats near the life raft were pulled off the ground and overturned with the children still strapped in them, ceiling panels fell down on top of us, and tremendous blasts of mud, water, and weeds were shooting up the stairwell. There were many grinding, grating, and shearing noises. I glanced to the left and noticed a hole worn in the side of the plane and I saw some of the rice paddy through that hole.

D. RESCUE EFFORTS AND SUBSEQUENT EVACUATION OF SURVIVORS TO INCLUDE EXTENT OF ANY INJURIES I HAVE SUSTAINED

After the plane stopped, I stood up and started to wonder how we would get out. The children in my immediate rows seemed relatively okay, and I hadn't registered yet that the overturned seats had children in them. I climbed over the rows and saw that the exit doors about mid-plane were open, so I proceeded to the center of the plane. Some children were already out of the plane on the right side, and one of the injured crewmen was there as well. Two of the children had rolled nearly face down in the mud, so I jumped to the ground (about 6-7 feet from the emergency door) to turn them face-up. After I turned them over, I noticed that the crewman was bleeding severely through a makeshift bandage on his head. I noticed the sound of helicopters landing very close by. Someone had thrown a knotted rope out the door, so with the rope and a boost from one of the crew, I went back into the plane. We found some bandages, and I handed them out to Dr. Stark who was with the crewman previously mentioned. I went back to my section and started handing children out the central door. (The exit nearest to my station was jammed.) The children from the upper end of the craft had been evacuated, so some of the crew came down to my end, and we formed a chain to hand the children out an exit on the right side of the plane. We righted the overturned seats, and found the children in apparently good health despite their ruffled appearance. The last part of my section to be evacuated was the area next to the stairwell. I could

D. Continued

only see an arm because a number of panels from the ceiling and wherever had fallen on top of the seats. I panicked and called over to a crewman that some kids were buried under the debris and I didn't know if they were alive. He was busy sending another section of children out the left exit doors, so he asked if I could check them. I crawled over the seats and proceeded to pull the debris off the children. I found them alive and in apparently good condition. I handed them to a crewwoman, and she handed them out to one of the helicopter crew. Only after I had handed her the last child from those seats did I notice that she had injured at least one arm. I helped her out of the plane, and we proceeded to a waiting helicopter. I asked one crewman about the bottom 1/2 of the plane--he shook his head "No". All of the other children had already been evacuated, so I joined her in that helicopter. Among the passengers I noticed (besides myself and the crewwoman) the injured crewman previously mentioned, 2 or 3 children, an American man from Air America (not on the plane), and 1 or 2 other crewmen from the CSA. I looked down and saw some crewmen still at the crash site, and the piece of smoldering aircraft remains some distance behind the plane. We proceeded to the Air America landing strip, where an ambulance was waiting for us. We went directly to 7th Day Adventist Hospital. While boarding the ambulance, I asked where the other children were. Someone told me they were fine.

Once at the hospital, we proceeded to the emergency room. Just before I entered the E.R., I was stopped by one of the Vietnamese hospital coordinators for our organization. I explained what had happened, and she ran off to telephone one of our nursery supervisors. I went into the Emergency Room, and a nurse asked me what had happened. I told her the plane had crashed and she went to find someone else. An American doctor questioned me briefly and called the American Embassy, and tried to get an outside line for me to call my office. Until this time, none of the other passengers or crew had arrived at the hospital. An American lady at the hospital gave me a glass of water, and we went to sit on the bench outside to wait for the others to come. Some ambulances from other hospitals arrived at SDA and were directed to the airport. Some members of FFAC arrived at the hospital, then the ambulances started to come in with the victims. The hospital grounds started to crowd with reporters, concerned friends and staff, and on-lookers. The E.R. was filled to overflowing, so all children were routed upstairs to the pediatric ward. The flow of ambulances slowed down, and I was directed to a table where a nurse checked my blood pressure and pulse. I got up to wash my face and a doctor asked me how I was. I told him I was okay, and he went back to the injured people. The ambulances started coming in again with the dead. They were directed immediately to the morgue. I waited in the E.R. waiting room and went out to check whenever an ambulance came in. Some of the crewmen were also in the waiting room--one of them had his camera and asked me to take a picture of him in his "crash clothes". He then decided the light wasn't good enough and returned to his seat. I saw

D. Continued

the black crewman wheeled through the Emergency Room on a stretcher. I think I also saw the pilot come through, but I'm not sure of that. The crewmen continued to talk about the crash, but nothing caught my ear until another crewman walked through the E.R. I gathered from the conversation that he had been on the lower level, but he disappeared into the E.R. before I could question him. Sometime during the time I spent in the waiting room and outside with the ambulances, I think I heard mention of previous trouble with the cargo door on the C5A. I don't know who said this, as I was interested only in the ambulances. I left the hospital later that evening and went home. The following afternoon I took another flight to San Francisco. The only injuries I sustained were multiple bruises and scratches on my legs and some on my arms, some pulled muscles in my right leg and arm, and possibly some damage to my left eye. (I was wearing contact lens, and caught an eyefull of dirt when we landed.) I have seen a physician, and he finds no physical reason for a slight decrease of vision in my left eye, so he advises me to wait for a few months, then be re-examined.

NOTE: Any information concerning the identities of children and employees of FFAC must be obtained only through FFAC, as this is considered confidential material.

Christine Leivermann
Christine E. Leivermann
7/2/75

SWORN STATEMENT

OF

Lt MARCIA WIRTZ

9TH AEROMEDICAL EVACUATION GROUP

CLARK AIR BASE, REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

17 APRIL 1975

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Clark AB
Republic of the Philippines
(Place)
17 April 1975
(Date)

I, Lt Marcia Wirtz, Colonel Bernard A. Waxstein, as C5 Collateral Investigating Officer, hereby state that has identified himself to me USAF.
(Special Agent AFOSI, Security Police, Other-Specify)

I do hereby voluntarily and of my own free will make the following statement without having been subjected to any coercion, unlawful influence or unlawful inducement.

I am Lt Marcia Wirtz and I am assigned to the 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Group at Clark. I have been flying for four months and I was on the C5 that crashed on 4 April. My DERO is March 1976 and my home address is Indiana. My social security number is .

I was alerted about six o'clock in the morning and went into the squadron and I was told when I was alerted that I would be going to Saigon and when I walked into the squadron several other members of the 9th Group were there, quite a few. We were told we would be going on the C5 to Saigon, apparently to bring back orphans. We got on the flight crew bus and went out to the flight line and out to the C5 where we were met by Captain Traynor, the aircraft commander, who briefed us concerning the C5 and told us when we boarded someone would further brief us, since we were unfamiliar with the C5. After we boarded, we took all of our medical supplies and equipment and secured them down-stairs in the aft section of the cargo area, then we went upstairs and the two loadmasters or crew members that were on the original C5 crew made us feel very much at home in the troop compartment. They explained to us about the galley section and briefed us on emergency procedures and general information concerning the aircraft. We also talked about removing the arm rests of the seats so that we could get as many babies as possible into the troop compartment and the best way seemed to be to remove the seats and secure the children in the seats with padding. So we decided after we departed Clark and were airborne we would do that which we did later on then.

The takeoff from Clark was easy. I had never been on a cargo plane of that type before and it just seemed very routine. After we were airborne for a short time, Colonel Willis came up to see us in the troop compartment and he sat down with Lt Aune and myself as well as with the three medical attendants that were on board with us, and briefed us as to what we might need to know should we run into any problems on the ground while at Saigon; and he told us that as soon as we had landed we were to come up to the flight deck and stay there all of the time we were on the ground until the orphans and whoever else we were taking back with us to Clark arrived.

After we landed at Saigon, we went downstairs and walked through the cargo section and up into the flight deck and we received a briefing from either a Major or Lt Colonel, from the Saigon area who told us when we first came up to the flight deck that we probably would be receiving in the neighborhood of 120, I believe he said, something like that, infants, probably under the age of three. He said that we might also be receiving some families of Americans there and secretaries who would be leaving Saigon. We were concerned whether we would be getting any children that were ill and that would require any type of medical help. He told us that they would all be healthy children at this time, but that maybe later the planes that came in would be taking out the sicker children, but that we would be getting the healthy orphans. While we were there and I think we were probably on the ground about an hour and one half or two hours, we prepared the cargo section to receive the people who would be seated there. What we did was to lay down double blankets on the floor, approximately half way back from below the flight deck. As far as I know we were given no direction as to how to prepare the cargo section for passengers and orphans. Lt Aune and myself ~~namely~~ Lt Aune, because she was the Senior Medical Director decided how to do it. We decided we would just go half way back on both sides of the cargo section because it was probably noisier in the back end so we decided we would keep most of the people up toward the front.

As I remember, I believe Lt Aune had carried some passengers in the C141, which was similar in the cargo section, in this way before and so she said, we'll put down some blankets on the floor and use the cargo straps to secure the people that are down there. When we went downstairs we received the word that we were getting the orphans, but they were still unloading some of the machinery from the cargo section. We stood near the cargo door and watched them take off equipment and the buses pulled up with the children and the children stood outside. It was kind of busy out there, people all around, watching, and observing us, Vietnamese and American. Most of these were Vietnamese soldiers that were unloading this machinery from the plane. When the children were allowed to come on board, I took one or two children up the ladder with me and stayed upstairs from that point on and positioned babies in seats in the troop compartment with the help of the loadmasters and the medical crew. We just put them in the seats and secured them in with the seat belts. As soon as we got all of them on board, even maybe before that, we started passing out juice and water and baby bottles and started to give them fluids before we took off from the airport.

P.M.
Rear
and
Ladder
one Ladder

We placed the children generally two to a seat and there was a pillow usually in front of them or at least something that padded them. Before we took off I made a check on every one of those children to make sure that they were secure.

Upstairs with me in the troop compartment, Lt Goffinet who I briefly saw and I asked, "How did you get here," and she said, "I was on the 141 that came over and since we didn't have any babies we decided to come over and help you with all of the infants," and I said, "Fine, because it looks like we can really use you." We had over a hundred babies I was sure of there at that time. Also, Sgt Hadley and Sgt Boutwell whom I don't remember seeing until after the crash, was upstairs with me because he had come over with the 141 crew. Sgt Hadley was assigned with the original C5 crew so he was up there. Sgt Gmerek was upstairs also working with us in getting the babies up there. The children I was responsible for were in two rows about four or five rows in front of the latrine, toward the ~~out~~ section of the cabin. I looked after about two rows of children, about 24 kids. Actually, since Lt Aune was the MCD and she had gone downstairs to work in the cabin, I took it upon myself to actually become the Medical Crew Director (MCD) for the upstairs section and after surveying the situation with all of the babies I decided that it would probably be best that the American women escort and the medical crew members each take maybe one or two rows of children and confine ourselves to them in passing the juice and water and giving them something to drink; so after we took off I passed this back to the ladies and said, "Why don't we do it this way, you stay right here with these children and give them juice and water. Takeoff was uneventful. None of the adults had seats. The female civilians, the medical people, and the crew members were not seated. As I was loading babies on, I wanted to put two children in a certain seat and I believe it was a medical technician came up behind me and said, "We are not putting any babies in that seat because that is going to be where the loadmaster sits, and then later on as we were still taking more babies up someone else had filled the seat, and I said "That seat if filled, Where are you going to sit?" And they said, "Oh, the adults are going to stand." I really did not give that much thought from that point on because of the nature of the mission since apparently we were taking all of the babies that we could get and so I said OK. I believe he said something like, "The pilot said this is OK," but like I say because of the type of mission that we were flying it just seemed like the logical thing to take all of the babies that we ~~can~~ and so we did. We must have been airborne about 20 minutes I would say and I had gone from my seat, my section of babies right there, toward the galley section to get some juice or water for the babies and I was just about at the troop compartment ladder where the grate is there, right to the left of the grate facing the galley when we had the rapid decompression.

MIDDLE
TROOP
12 on
each side

I heard what sounded to me like the sound of the rapid decompression that I had heard at flight school. It was just a loud boom and since I was facing toward the galley section, I really was not looking in the cabin area. What I saw right there in that immediate area was the fogging, some very loose and light things just flying around, nothing that would injure you, just some debris-like flying, some loose little papers flying. Looking out into the cargo compartment through the grating and through the ladder section right there I saw sky, and what looked like sea way below. I could see this huge hole and I cannot remember seeing where the airplane started or ended. All I remember is seeing that hole, maybe that is because that was where my attention was focused but I couldn't tell you how much of that plane was there or not because all I remember seeing was that hole and Sgt Perkins on the ladder with only three or four rungs of the ladder left hanging under him. He was hanging on for dear life at the top of the ladder. In my mind I was really frightened and I was putting on my oxygen mask thinking we are going to die now because this is bad news, and so I breathed some oxygen a little bit and I tried to give it to four children that were sitting in the two crew members seats that were facing the flight deck from the back of the airplane. Of course these were tiny babies and they kept pushing them away. But they did not appear to pass out, they just sat there and looked at me, and just pushed the mask away and I kept breathing the oxygen a little bit. I remember seeing Lt Aune standing in the first two rows of the middle section of the troop compartment and I remember mouthing to her, "I am really scared." And of course I am sure it was written on my face, but I remember seeing her standing there and that is what I said to her. Then I looked down and saw Sgt Perkins hanging on the ladder and two other flight crew members who were there were trying to hold on to him and help him up into the troop compartment and trying to give him some oxygen too. After about a minute, I believe, of standing there, one of the loadmasters and flight crew members, whoever he was, was there. He picked up his head set and got in touch with the pilot and he said to me, "It's alright, Lt, the pilot says that he can land it and we are going back to Saigon and he can put the gear down by hand, we can land it, so you can take your oxygen off now, because you don't need it." This sounded good to me at the time, although I was still very frightened and, gradually, after he said that, I was totally convinced in my mind that we really could not land safely that we really were going to crash and probably all of us would die. I was really convinced of that in my mind, but I decided, OK, I will go back toward the section of babies where I was before and try and talk with the ladies and see that everybody remains calm as can be. So at first I slid in between two seats facing forward and on the floor sat with one of the escorts and she took my hand. We talked a little bit, and I asked her if her husband

was still in Saigon and she said, "No, my fiancee is," and we just talked a second or two and then I decided to go over to the opposite side of the aisle and I braced myself facing forward with my arms ~~secured~~ ^{out} over the babies and I leaned forward and just stayed like that, and all of a sudden we touched the ground. Again, I was probably four or five rows up from the latrine on the right side of the aircraft kneeling on the floor between two seats facing forward ~~was~~ ^{with} my body sprawled across the babies that were in that seat. Descent seemed to me to be very gradual, I didn't know when we were going to land, and there was no way to tell, but just all of a sudden what I felt was we bounced a couple of times and then we came to a stop. I just remember bouncing, like a thud, not real hard. I didn't get thrown around, I was just kneeling there across those infants and we just bounced, I had my head down and it didn't seem like a real harsh landing to me from where I was, and when we came to a stop I knew I wasn't hurt and I was so surprised. I was amazed that I was not hurt. I thought I better get up and then when we did come to a stop I saw this explosion and fire and there was some spray of debris and soot flying around in the cabin and it smelled like smoke and I thought we must be on fire too, but it was just the wind or the force of the explosion had sent some of that debris back into our cabin section. So I immediately got up when we came to a stop and went to the exit which was I believe right across from me or very close there and I looked ~~at it~~ ^{at it} because it looked so big and overpowering and I thought, "You'll never get that open" and I stood there a second and I turned around to go to another exit or look for another outlet and then I must have turned back and somebody had already opened it. And so then I got out of the exit and, as I remember, I was the first one out, although there were also two escorts. The exit would be in the middle of the troop compartment on the left-hand side of the aircraft when you are facing the flight deck. So I got out and looked around outside for a second and looked at the troop compartment from the outside and saw in front of us the other section burning, and figured, "Well, our section isn't going to burn because it isn't on fire now and the rest is." I could see that our section had just separated itself from the rest; it was an entity in itself right there. In my mind I thought the cargo section was under us and that in front of us was the flight deck burning because it had been in front of us, being the logical thing.

So, I looked back in the exit and I said "Why don't you start handing out the babies to me." The other adults were there and I could see the babies were just sitting there, they looked fine. They were all secured in their seats just as they had been when we took off, and I said to one of the adults there, "Why don't you start handing out the babies now, I am sure somebody will come in after us now, let's get them out here." Then they started handing out babies and I went around to the front of the troop compartment and saw the one loadmaster who was bleeding from his head and looked like he

*stood up and
so to be sent*

was very severely injured, and I saw the lady who I had sat with and whose hand I had held. She looked like she was dead. Then I saw Lt Goffinet and I believe she said something to me like, "What are we going to do with these people?" I said, "They are very seriously hurt now or dead. Let's get the babies out." I had either already told the first helicopter that came in or I said I will tell the first helicopter that comes in to bring a litter on their next trip or to send two litters for these people to get them out right away and so I said, "Let's get the babies out." Then I went back to that exit that I had come out and Sgt Perkins was one of the crewmembers on the inside who was sitting by the exit who just kept handing babies out to me until we had them all out. He was injured, had splinted his leg with a crutch, one of the children's crutches, and he also looked like his shoulder was hurting him, but he still kept trying to hand out babies and children. The helicopters came in within three to five minutes after we were on the ground and the South Vietnamese and Air America started taking out the survivors. During this time I was standing by the exit receiving babies from the exit there and passing them along to other crew members and adults who were in the marshy land. There was water, there were parts of the plane in the water. So it was kind of treacherous to just get the babies out of the plane and up on to some level ground where the helicopter could land and get the babies out. It must have taken us probably a half hour or so to get all of the children out and when I saw that the other two people who were seriously injured were going to be moved, I went back into the troop compartment and made a check to make sure all the children were out. I also went up to the galley section, where my purse had been, and there was hardly anyone left in the plane and I thought, "If it is lying out there I am going to get it and Lt Aune's." It was in the debris there and so I picked both of our purses up and took them and went back out of the troop compartment to the helicopters and the one helicopter was coming in to get the lady who I believed was dead, and I got on the helicopter and went with her and we went back to Tan Son Nhut. When we got on the ground there I was still very frightened to be in Saigon itself. I was really afraid of any kind of problems we could have in Saigon, just being there, and as soon as I got off the helicopter, I saw the navigator. I went up to him and I said, "Please don't go anywhere without me because I'm scared to death to be here in Saigon," and he said, "Oh, we won't go anywhere without you, just come on," and he took care of me from then on. It was Capt Langford.

The woman whose hand I held during descent had a daughter on the aircraft, and the daughter was one of the people that came out of the exit right after me and she said, "I think my mother was hurt in there. When you go in, see if she was alright." But that girl

meandered off into the rice paddy. I saw her and another one of her friends, I guess, just walking back toward the tail when we started taking out the passengers. I don't know if she became frightened or shocked or what, but she just kind of walked away. She was picked up later by the helicopter, but she was frightened and afraid for her mother. When the plane hit, her mother was almost directly across from me in the row of babies, directly across the aisle from me, or in maybe the row in front of that section. She was very close to me, so she was on the left side in the troop compartment about ~~one and a half~~ ^{one and a half} feet from the forward bulkhead of the troop compartment because in that side of the airplane the seats extended farther forward toward the flight deck because the latrines were on the right side. I don't know if she was braced or not because my head was down on the seats and I was braced and I didn't look up. The friend ~~she~~ ^{THE WOMEN'S DAUGHTER} walked away with may have been another American escort who looked to be about 21 or 22 and seemed to know about the orphans in that she said to me when we came on, "Please don't give them any milk, because they are not used to milk, the younger children are not used to milk under a year or so and they will really get diarrhea so don't give them any milk." I remember her - she was slender and had a rather pointed nose and tall. Kind of a model-like figure if I remember right. I know she survived and she was an American, I BELIEVE.

She seemed to know about the babies and she did survive, in fact, I saw her at the Tan Son Nhut at the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital walking around, not appearing to have any significant injuries.

7m 24

When we got to the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital in Saigon, I stayed in one of the emergency rooms, or examining rooms with most of the flight crew who were right there and we just waited while they were bringing survivors in. Then I saw my friend, Lt Aune, and I helped clean her up, clean out her wounds, and I then went in and saw Lt Goffinet in the X-Ray Dept for a minute; and I just kind of made the rounds for a little bit, seeing where the people were and how they were doing.

I feel like the entire medical and flight crew reacted in a totally professional manner from the rapid decompression on, and that our training really paid off. Once we got on the ground, somehow the pieces just started coming together, you know, you have got to try to get people out of the exits and the helicopters you know are going to come in. The aircraft commander especially sticks in my mind as just being outstanding in that he just really had it together and he checked everybody and came around to the hospital in Saigon and asked us how we were, and just reminded us not to give out any information that might be detrimental to making an accurate investigation of the crash. NOTHING FOLLOWS.

CONTINUATION SHEET FOR AF FORM 1168, 1168a and/or 1169.

31. I further state that I have read this entire statement. Initialed all pages and corrections, and signed this statement, and that it is correct and true as written.

WITNESSES:

Marina R. Ruiz
(Signature)

(Signature)

(Address)

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a person authorized by law to administer oaths, this

18 day of April 1975
at F Clark AB, Republic of
the Philippines
(Signature of Person Administering Oath.)

(Type Name, Grade & Title of Person Administering Oath.)

SWORN STATEMENT

OF

CAPTAIN KEITH D. MALONE

22 MILITARY AIRLIFT SQUADRON

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA

15 MAY 1975

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Travis Air Force Base, California

(Place)

15 MAY 1975

(Date)

I, Captain Keith D. Malone, hereby state that
Colonel Bernard A. Waxstein, Jr. has identified himself to me
as C5A Collateral Investigation Officer USAF.
(Special Agent AFOSI, Security Police, Other-Specify)

I do hereby voluntarily and of my own free will make the following statement without having been subjected to any coercion, unlawful influence or unlawful inducement. I am Keith D. Malone, Captain, , 22 Military Airlift Squadron, USAF, I was assigned to the 22 Military Airlift Squadron, Travis Air Force Base, California, on 17 August 1974. I have approximately 1793 hours total flying time in the USAF and 80 hours total flying time in the C-5 aircraft. My crew qualification as of 4 April 1975 was copilot, non-qualified my position in the cockpit upon departure from Saigon, Vietnam, at approximately 1600 hours, 4 April 1975, was in the Instructor Pilot Seat (Jump Seat).

We arrived at Clark AB, R. P. at 1435L on 3 April 1975. We processed through ACP, checked into billeting, ate at the Officers' Club and retired for crew rest at 1900. At 0300, 4 April we were alerted to aircraft 80218 going to Saigon. We reported to ACP to file the flight plan at 0400, received pre-mission briefing and ate breakfast. At 0600 we were notified that we would be delivering cargo to Saigon and bringing orphans back to Clark from Saigon. At 0700 we proceeded to the aircraft and were notified that aircraft was not maintenance ready. It still required an engine run on No. 2 engine and the change of the copilot's window was not yet completed. At 0800 the maintenance was completed and medical technicians for the orphans had arrived. We were still waiting for blankets, milk, fruit juices, etc. At 0830 we were notified that a Lt Colonel Willis would be going to Saigon with us. At 0900 we were told Saigon was not ready for us and we were to come into Ops and wait for a 1100 departure. We proceeded to Ops and once inside Lt Colonel Willis met us and said everything was arranged and we were to take off ASAP. We proceeded back to the aircraft, ~~all~~ ^{all} checklists and departed Clark at 1013L. The flight from Clark to Saigon was from 1013L to 1253L. Enroute, Captain Traynor directed that all crew baggage be brought upstairs and further directed SMSgt Perkins to formulate his plan for the offload of cargo and the upload of orphans. SMSgt Perkins also assigned various crew members to maintain constant vigilance around specific areas of the aircraft during the offload and onload.

We landed at Saigon and were parked on ~~taxiway~~ ¹⁸. There was some delay prior to shutting down engines because ground parked us on Taxiway 18 and told us to shut down engines while a marshall wanted us to come forward on the taxiway. We shut down as ground control directed. We proceeded with the offload of the howitzers and upon completion we started to onload the orphans. The offload of the howitzers was quite orderly. The offload crew was working rapidly. There were a few foreign reporters standing to one side observing the offload. There is nothing out of the ordinary I can comment on about the offload. The onload was not so well organized. We did not know how many orphans we would be getting. The busses with the children pulled up and the women carrying babies brought them up to the left troop door where they would hand the babies to personnel inside the aircraft who in turn would hand them to us on the ladder and we would pass the babies upstairs. After we were full upstairs the rest were loaded downstairs. Because I was not a primary crew member and had no other

specific duties I assisted with the orphans. I helped with carrying the babies upstairs and then in loading the passengers' baggage. All baggage was placed in rows forward of the ramp and on the ramp. Once everyone was aboard I proceeded to the troop compartment and assisted in quieting the babies. Approximately 20 minutes prior to takeoff, I proceeded to the flight deck and took my position in the IP seat. I was in the IP seat to assist with any additional radio calls. We started engines and took off at 1603L.

We had a normal takeoff on Runway 07 and after takeoff we turned right and proceeded direct to Vung Tau. At approximately FL 160, the aircraft commander decided to increase airspeed from 200 KCAS to 270 KCAS. At FL 200 I proceeded back to the latrine area. As I started to enter the relief crew compartment we experienced the rapid decompression. I knew immediately what it was and knew I needed oxygen and I ran back to the IP seat and put on my quick don oxygen mask. At that time we were in a left descending turn back to Tan Son Nhut. While in the descent the copilot was having trouble transmitting so the navigator was given the radios. Since I had better access to the radios I informed the navigator I would assume control of the radios. Also, during the descent the aircraft commander realized that he had no elevator control and consequently could not control our descent. Power was added to make the nose come up and the descent was somewhat controlled using power for pitch control and ailerons for bank. At approximately FL 100 the gear was lowered. Since we had lost hydraulic systems 1 and 2 only the forward mains would extend normally. The nose and aft gear were emergency extended. During this time I had been talking to Saigon approach on guard and had informed them of our situation and our intentions. I told them we would be crash landing on Runway 25L because we could not control our descent. At approximately 8 miles out and at 4000 feet we started our turn to final. At this time I realized I was not strapped in so I then put my shoulder harness and seat belt on. When I looked back we were in a nose low attitude and the airspeed was building. The pilots added power and the nose appeared to rise, they then rolled out the bank and the decision was made to land straight ahead. We impacted the ground, bounced and impacted once again. I unstrapped and followed the aircraft commander out the aircraft commander's side window. The engineer followed me and then the copilot. The helicopters, both ARVN and Air America, began to arrive within minutes after impact and started taking survivors back to hospitals. All crew members assisted with the evacuation of the survivors. After all surviving passengers were evacuated we were taken aboard a helicopter to Air America and then to the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital. We were checked and treated and then taken to the Gray House for billeting. The next day we boarded a C-141 at 1615 and were flown to Clark. We arrived at 1845 and we were checked into C-Ward of the Base Hospital.

CONTINUATION SHEET FOR AF FORM 1168, 1168a and/or 1169.

31. I further state that I have read this entire statement. Initialed all pages and corrections, and signed this statement, and that it is correct and true as written.

WITNESSES:

(Signature)

(Address)

(Signature)

(Address)

22 Military Airlift Squadron, Travis AFB CA

(Address)

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a person authorized by law to administer oaths, this

15th day of May 1975
at Travis AFB, California

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(Signature of Person Administering Oath.)

BERNARD A. WAXSTEIN, JR., Colonel, USAF
C5A Collateral Investigation Officer

(Type Name, Grade & Title of Person Administering Oath.)

SWORN STATEMENT

OF

1ST LIEUTENANT REGINA C. AUNE

10TH AEROMEDICAL EVACUATION GROUP

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA

5 MAY 1975

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Travis AFB, California

(Place)

5 MAY 1975

(Date)

I, 1stLt Regina C. Aune, FV, hereby state that
Colonel Bernard A. Waxstein, has identified himself to me
as C-5 Collateral Investigating Officer USAF.
(Special Agent AFOSI, Security Police, Other-Specify)

I do hereby voluntarily and of my own free will make the following statement without having been subjected to any coercion, unlawful influence or unlawful inducement.

I'm 1stLt Regina C. Aune. My serial number is FV. I'm stationed with the 10 Aero-Medical Evacuation Group, Travis AFB, CA. My home of record in the states is Ohio, Cleveland. I've been on active duty for two years and three months and a flight nurse not quite a year. It'll be a year in July. On Friday morning, the 4th of April, we were alerted by Sgt Smedley, whose one of our Tenth Schedulers, who happened to be out here, trying to work the transition with the combination of the two squadrons, 9th and 10th Aero-Medical Evacuation Group which we were in the midst of combining. We had been previously briefed that Saigon was kind of hottish and we didn't know if we'd be going in or not, and that we would all probably be told that we would be on alert at some time. Anyway, that morning he alerted us at 6:15, and told us to report to the squadron in 30 minutes, and not to worry about bringing any clothes or anything, but bring our flight gear that we would need and that we would probably be starting flights into Saigon. When we got to the squadron, in the 9th Group Building we went to a conference room where everybody was getting assembled and we signed in so that they could keep track of who was coming in and who was getting there and everything. We weren't sure what we were going in to pick up in Saigon, whether it was going to be Embassy people, babies; nothing was real crystal clear on what we were going to be doing, but we were going to be starting to go into Saigon. We were briefed that there would be a crew picked to go in on a C-5. It was finally decided that we were going to fly basic med crew which consists of two flight nurses and three med techs. That's the ordinary crew you'd fly on a C-9 and a 141. It was also decided that they would be mixed crews, both 9th and 10th people. The final crew composition was Lt Wirtz and me, Sgt Gmerek, Sgt Wise and Sgt Hadley. Sgt Hadley is a reservist from the 65th. Sgt Wise and Sgt Gmerek are in 9th. Lt Wirtz is 9th and I'm 10th, so we were a mixed crew. I was the senior medical director of the medical crew. We were told that we'd be taking C-130 contingency kits that the 9th Group keeps here which is med gear on the plane. We went out to the C-5 and were told the orders were typed up and everything ready. Everything was happening fast. The C-5, as far as I know, had never been used for any air evac-type mission. We went out to the ramp and the flight crew was at the aircraft. The aircraft commander, Captain Traynor said that he had never flown an air evac mission which, as a C-5 pilot, he wouldn't have. Some of his crew had though. They had been previous 141 crew members and so they were somewhat familiar with an air evac mission. He just wanted to be briefed on what we did on air evac missions and LtCol Baukus, Chief Nurse of the 9th briefed him pretty much, herself. She briefed him on what we did, which is really that the flight crew has no responsibilities for taking care of any of the patients. That's our responsibility, but we coordinate with them. They have the responsibility for the aircraft. Really, as far as aircraft safety goes, the aircraft commander is in charge, but as far as patient safety and patient problems if we have that, then the medical crew director is to coordinate with the aircraft.

commander. This happens sometimes on the 141 when you have to maybe put a phone patch into a doctor because somebody is really sick or you have to turn around and go back. That happened on a 141 flight. But it's just coordinating between the medical crew director and the A/C, but really you each have your own responsibilities. He was briefed on that. He briefed us a little bit on the aircraft and he said when you get on he would have his flight crew walk us around the plane. I'd flown on a C-5 as a passenger one time, but I don't believe the rest of the med crew had been on a C-5. When we got ourselves settled on the plane, the loadmasters did give us a walkaround and briefed us on the emergency equipment. The flight to Saigon was uneventful. It was just a routine-type flight. The A/C had told us that when we land in Saigon, because we didn't know what we were going to be getting into or exactly what we were going to be picking up, he would prefer that the crew would all stay on the plane. He would tell us who and when he wanted anyone to get off the plane. He had talked to the loadmasters and told them that he wanted medical crew to stay up on the flight deck, so when we landed at Saigon, the loadmasters told us just to leave all our medical gear in the troop compartment. They were going to pull the ladder up and we could go on down to the flight deck and stay up on the flight deck until we were notified of what we were actually going to be doing, which is what we did. We went up to the flight deck and stayed there talking among ourselves while Captain Traynor went in to find out what exactly we were going to be doing. Later, a lieutenant colonel, who I had not seen before and do not know, came up to the flight deck and said we were going to be taking about 230 babies. He thought they were around the age of two with a few older ones like 6, 7, 8, 9 and about 40 escorts. I said to him, "Were they sick babies? We wanted to know the conditions of the children." He said, "No, they were well babies. They weren't sick." I was told that the escorts were secretaries and people that volunteered to escort these children out because they wanted to get them out of Saigon too. A few I believe must not have been American citizens. They spoke with British or Australian, New Zealand-type accents. Then I asked him about customs, carrying all these people on manifests, because I didn't know how on earth, you know, our manifest is very different on an air evac mission and you usually know ahead of time. We have regular forms to fill out. I knew I couldn't do a regular manifest, as far as names of all these people. He said that would all be taken care of. The customs was going to be taken care of and we wouldn't have to worry about anything like that when we were starting to emplane the babies. Then I asked how they were going to bring these children to the plane. Because I thought, 2 years old, they're not going to walk to the plane even if they are two years old, but I think many of those children were much younger because all the babies upstairs, most of them could not walk. They had to be carried. He said they had buses with the child-care workers who had been taking care of these babies at the orphanages, who would carry these children out to the plane. What we had to do, since the ladder to the upper section of the C-5 (troop compartment) was very steep, was line the entire stairway and just hand the babies up. We had decided to put the babies upstairs because we thought we could secure them best up there and some adults as well as half of the med crew. We had already split up the five of us. I was going to stay downstairs. Lt Wirtz was going to stay upstairs. Sgt Gmerek was going to stay upstairs and the other two med techs, Sgt Wise and Sgt Hadley would be downstairs. The flight crew helped us then emplaning the children on the plane. The flight crew and the med crew together decided how the babies and their escorts were to be carried in the cargo compartment. We just kind of debated the best way to do it amongst ourselves. The only way we could decide was to take the blankets that we had and put them on the floor and use cargo tie-down straps. Although we did seat some of the children along the side and use cargo tie-down straps around small groups to hold them in. There was really no other way we could have done it in the cargo compartment.

There were no seats. There was nothing to really secure them to. With this situation confronting us, we decided to do it the way we did because we didn't know any other way. It seemed to us to be the best way to do it. We felt that putting the small children and babies upstairs in the seat belts, we'd be able to secure them better than downstairs. What we had done was take all the arm rests out of the center of the seats all the way down. We had all the pillows and blankets like they always put on a MAC flight for passenger comfort. We used those to pad the babies. We fit them in tightly and padded them in. We figured that way they wouldn't be able to squirm out. They would be better protected that way and they would probably wiggle out of the cargo tie-down straps downstairs. We still had to put a few of the babies downstairs because we couldn't fit them all upstairs. We were really hoping that when we got there we'd be able to get everybody upstairs. We felt it would just be safer for everyone to be upstairs. We had too many people. We put as many up there as we could. We put two babies to a seat and there were no seats left for the crew or for the escorts or for the med crew who were up there. We had to stand. I didn't realize at first that we were going to stand. I thought we were going to sit in the seats and hold the babies and strap them in like we have mothers who want to hold the baby on a 141. Talking with the other flight nurses afterwards, they were saying they felt they were better off standing because they could watch more of the children in case any of them started to slip out. They were pretty active when we first got them on. They were crying, fussy, but as we climbed to altitude they were all falling asleep. When we finally had most of the babies on, I said now we can bring the adults and escorts on. We sent some of the escorts up with the babies that were upstairs and we kept some downstairs and what we did is when we sat the little ones down on the floor of the cargo compartment, we sat some of the escorts with them so that they could, because we only had the cargo tie-down straps to keep them down anyway. We sat them so that they could reach all the kids they were with so that they could hold them. Hold them down and watch them in case they wiggled out on takeoff. Some of the children had little hospital-type bracelets on. Some had their names on around their neck. They had little cards on a little string around their neck. It just had their name. All the records are all gone because they were downstairs. We had secured the baby food and all the diapers and everything. We had put all the people downstairs in the forward part of the cargo compartment. The A/C had suggested that because it would be a little quieter there. He said we should keep them forward. It doesn't get so much vibration. It doesn't get so much noise in the front part of the plane. That's what we did. They were forward in the cargo compartment. They were not toward the rear of the plane at all. What we had back there was the diapers and the baby food, the babies records and the set of med gear they brought in on the 141. We had secured the other med gear in front. We took some stuff out and took some stuff upstairs and secured them behind the loadmaster's seat. The rest of the med gear is too heavy to carry, it's too awkward to carry up to the troop compartment. We just took some stuff out in plastic bags that we thought we might need upstairs, and took that up and left some down there. They secured the med gear from the 141 back there with the suitcases that they put on, and tied everything down. After we took off, everything seemed routine. I was sitting along the side and Col Willis was sitting next to me. Capt Klinker, the other nurse from my squadron, was sitting on the other side of me. ~~We were just~~, there was a lady with a cast on, we were kind of watching her because she was apprehensive about the flight. She started to get sick after we took off and I suggested to Capt Klinker that we had better ~~go~~ over and do something. So we both got up and walked over to her and got two of the med techs, Sgt Paget and Sgt Wise, I think that's who it was, and got

her and laid her down and got some blankets and everything and propped her up. And I said to Capt Klinker, "I'll go up and get her some medicine," because she was having pain and she was really uncomfortable and I said, "I'll go up and get her something." The narcotic kits were upstairs. All the medicines were up there. It seemed to me out of the corner of my eye I saw the rest of the flight crew, you know how the engineers and loadmasters go around and do their routine checks. It seemed to me that I remember seeing them going around just doing their routine checks. No indication anything was wrong, just simply routine. The A/C had said when we started out that he would be sure to have a loadmaster in the cargo compartment and upstairs in the troop compartment always on headset so we'd be able to communicate, we could just immediately communicate with him so that nobody, none of the crew, would be out of communication with the other part of the crew. So that we all knew what was going on. I went up the stairs and I went up to the galley back there where the grating is on the floor. I pulled a med kit out from behind the seat and I opened it up and I got the medicine out and Sgt Parker was back there. He was on the headset at the time I think. He leaned over and asked me if there was anything I needed. I was closing up the med kit and that's when we had the rapid decompression. It was just like one huge explosive sound. It was a typical rapid decompression. I had experienced this in training in flight school. In the altitude chamber they take us through a rapid decompression. They simulate one on a C-9 mockup that they have at flight school so you have like two experiences while you're in flight school. Sgt Perkins, one of the loadmasters was on the ladder coming up. He was really coming up right behind me practically. Of course, the ladder was ripped out from under him and he was left half hanging on the troop compartment floor and half hanging out over the edge. One of the loadmasters was sitting right there and grabbed him and held onto him. I don't know how I got from where I was to where I went, but I went over to where the first row of seats are, so I must have gone around them. I knew we had to get oxygen. The one loadmaster was putting the walk-around bottle on. The oxygen masks had all deployed. I thought I've got to pull some of them to the loadmasters over there. The one had his walkaround on and I got one to reach the one loadmaster and he managed to pull Sgt Perkins up. I put one on and I made sure the adults put one on. Nobody panicked. Everybody was fine, as if this happened on every flight. The babies were all half asleep anyway and I'm sure they got a little anoxic, but they were very relaxed anyway so what the rest of the crew was doing was taking an oxygen mask and going along the row with the babies and giving them oxygen. By that time, we were down to safe altitude where we didn't need oxygen anymore. One loadmaster was still on the headset and he said that the A/C said we were down below 10,000 feet and that we were going to try and go back to Saigon. He thought he'd be able to get the gear down. He thought we'd be able to land. I remember just looking, well I had looked out the back of the plane, there was just nothing there at all, except for two or three suitcases that managed to stay right on the edge. All the cargo tie-down straps that had been around them were gone, but they were just sitting there right on the edge - on this jagged edge of what must have been the ramp. All I could see was the water. What we did then, we went around and resecured all the babies. Of course, I didn't know what was going on downstairs. We had no way of knowing what had happened downstairs or what, no way of getting back down there even. But evidently some people from flight crew that had been on the flight deck had gone down and they said everybody was pretty calm down there too. We had no way of getting down to the cargo compartment since the ladder was blown away. In fact, I remember then we said, I don't think any of us expected a crash landing. I don't think we realized or the A/C maybe didn't realize yet at that point either, how much damage had been done to the plane. Because the loadmaster said

we're going to have to use the slides to get out. We'll deploy them as soon as we land. Who do you want to go out? I said, "The two med techs, Sgt Hadley and Sgt Gmerek," and they both said right away, "We'll go out. We'll each go out a slide and then we can start." That would be our only way out. We said okay. We just went around securing the babies. I remember saying to one of the adults who was trying to stand up, not to stand up, to stay down because I didn't expect us to have an easy landing. I didn't expect to crash, but I didn't, for some reason I didn't expect it, from what they said we were going to try to land and I know they've had RD's and been able to land the plane. I just said, "Stay down and just watch the kids" and that's what we did. That first impact was really a surprise. I was in the aisle sitting on the floor, midway in the troop compartment, watching two rows of babies. Sgt Hadley was in front of me a few rows forward and Lt Wirtz was behind me a few rows. She was inside a row. Sgt Hadley and I were both in the aisle. I don't remember where everybody else was. Sgt Parker and Sgt Perkins, I believe, were behind me. I believe Lt Goffinet was in front up near the latrines and I believe Sgt Doughty was up there, but I'm not absolutely positive. Those are the only two people I'm sure of. Hadley was in front of me and Lt Wirtz was behind me. Everything happened so fast. And we couldn't see, of course. There's no windows, except the emergency window exits. As far as I know, because from what I could see everybody was down toward the floor, and watching the babies and trying to keep them in, but also in a sense bracing themselves. Then we impacted. It's like a moment without even thinking. I just know it happened and I don't even remember what I thought. I don't even think I was afraid. I don't know, it was just that split second. Then I remember Sgt Hadley. He told me later he jumped up, but he went over my head and I thought he flew over my head. I must have tried to reach up and grab him because I let go and that's when I started sliding down, I remember I must have just slid all the way down the aisle past the latrines and ended up on this pile of rubble. But the second impact was kind of like, after we impacted the second time, it was sort of like a speed boat going through water. This water was all mud that was pouring in. We had been separated I guess from the rest of the aircraft and we were just like an independent little part of the plane. We were just tearing through there, at what seemed like a tremendous rate of speed and all this mud was just pouring in. We were just completely covered with it. All I can remember is a speed boat going, speeding right through that mud. We came to a stop. I didn't see anybody. Of course we had no lights; it was completely dark. I remember I was on this pile of rubble and I knew I could tell that my foot was broken immediately, but I knew at the same time I had to get up and we had to get everybody out of there. I got up and Sgt Perkins was standing up there. He was back in that area and I knew his leg was hurt pretty bad. His was hurt in the RD. I don't think it was hurt as bad in the actual crash as it was when the ladder was ripped off. He said we've got to get these kids out. Then I saw Sgt Boutwell who was a member of the other med crew that had come on, and Sgt Hadley and they were throwing the window exits out. They had gotten them open. I remember taking one sort of fast walk toward the back, toward the galley, of the troop compartment, just to look to see as much as I could as to how the babies were doing. Then I remember seeing that the slides had started to inflate in the plane. It looked like the babies were okay so we just started grabbing babies and getting them out. Then we had to get some of us outside too. So I crawled out one of the window exits. I'm not real certain which one, I just remember I crawled out with some babies. Sgt Perkins started handing babies out. Then I thought when I got out,

I looked over it was like to our left was what had to be the flight deck and the cockpit. And I just thought, "Everybody is dead." I looked back and I could see the tail and I could see people, evidently coming out the other side of the troop compartment. I thought all the flight crew was dead, until all of a sudden I saw them come running over. Major Wallace, was the first one I saw. He came running. It looked like he was running on air, never touching the ground, and I realized they seemed to be okay and they came running over immediately and we just kind of made a line and started taking the babies out. It seemed a long time and yet it was very fast, the helicopters came in and must have known we were down and where we were. It was probably five minutes at the most before they started coming in. We were just handing the babies out in assembly-line fashion. Passing them from one to another and getting them out. We were just grabbing them two and three at a time, as fast as we could grab them. I wasn't there for the whole evacuation. Because after awhile I couldn't bend over and I couldn't stand up anymore because of my foot and my back. I don't remember exactly what I said, but I know the next thing I remember is that Sgt Hadley and Maj Wallace were helping me get into the plane or helicopter and I remember saying, "Well, let me hold some of the babies." I could hold some on my lap. I did. They took me in the helicopter and the ambulance to the hospital on a litter, and I remember seeing them just put some babies on it. So I held some of the babies on the litter with me when I went to the hospital. I don't think I passed out, but I don't remember what happened at that moment. I knew I couldn't bend over and I started to drop the babies I was holding. For that minute I don't know what happened, but I know the next thing I remember was being put on the helicopter. I have four broken bones in my right foot. I've got a cast on it now, and a puncture wound of some kind I guess on my leg which is also covered by the cast. A decompression fracture of L-3 in my back. Just cuts and scrapes and a laceration on my elbow that healed up really well and tons of black and blue marks. I'm green from head to toe, but really, considering all things, my wounds weren't really terribly serious. When we read the paper we got very discouraged because it sounded like more than half of the people didn't survive and I think that it should be the other way around. I think we had more people upstairs than down, really. We had a hundred forty-five babies upstairs. I would say there were only about 130 people downstairs. That would be my estimate. Everybody has asked how the crew behaved and I really feel like everybody did it as if they did every day - probably sounds stupid to say they did it as if they did every day, but nobody - even during the whole egress from the plane, after the crash, wasn't like anybody had to take charge saying you do this or you do that - they kind of fell into line and just did it.-----

CONTINUATION SHEET FOR AF FORM 1168, 1168a and/or 1169.

31. I further state that I have read this entire statement. Initialed all pages and corrections, and signed this statement, and that it is correct and true as written.

WITNESSES:

(Signature)

(Address)

(Signature)

(Address)

Regina C. Aune

(Signature) REGINA C. AUNE

FAIRFIELD, CALIF.

(Address)

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a person authorized
by law to administer oaths, this

5 th day of May 19 75

at Travis AFB, California

Regina C. Aune
(Signature of Person Administering Oath.)
BERNARD A. WAXSTEIN, JR.
Col, C-5 Collateral Investigating Officer

(Type Name, Grade & Title of Person Administering Oath.)

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2. Children sleeping before and after decompression (Schneider, p. 1908-9)
3. Some Children still asleep after crash (Schneider, p. 1918)
4. Description of wreckage location and arrival of helicopter (Schneider, p. 1919)

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1. Description of time, cargo, and events when C-5A arrived in Saigon (Schneider, p. 2127-2129)
2. Describes C-5A heating system (Schneider, p. 2135)
3. Describes location of various pieces of wreckage (Schneider, p. 2148-9; Marchetti (May/20 P.M.) p. 177-9)
4. Describes off-loading children from troop compartment and loading on helos (Schneider, p. 2150-51; Marchetti (May/20 P.M.) p. 180)
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4. Describes arrival of helos (Schneider, p. 2221-22)
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