

CARTER, GEORGE WILLIAMS

Name: George Williams Carter  
Rank/Branch: O4/US Army  
Unit: Advisory Team 22 - MACV  
Date of Birth: 04 December 1933 (Nicholls GA)  
Home City of Records: Apopka FL  
Date of Loss: 24 April 1972  
Country of Loss: South Vietnam  
Loss Coordinates: 143918N 1074711E (ZB001219)  
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered  
Category: 3  
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: Ground  
Other Personnel in Incident: Robert W. Brownlee; Wade L. Ellen; James E. Hunsicker; Johnny M. Jones; Kenneth J. Yonan; Franklin Zollicoffer (all missing); Charles M. Lea; Ricky B. Bogle (helicopter crew, rescued); Julius G. Warmath; John P. Keller; Walter H. Ward (helicopter passengers, rescued); Charles W. Gordon, Cao Ky Chi (evaded capture near Dak To)

REMARKS: KIA ON ISLE - 5 RV - NT SUBJ - J

SYNOPSIS: On the evening of April 23, 1972, Capt. Kenneth J. Yonan accompanied his ARVN counterpart to a water tower located on the northwestern edge of the Tanh Canh base camp compound near Dak To, Kontum Province, South Vietnam. Yonan was an advisor assigned to Advisory Team 22, MACV, and was assisting the ARVN 42nd Regiment based there.

At about 0530 hours on April 24, Capt. Yonan was still in the water tower when Viet Cong attacked the camp perimeter. Although tanks fired at and hit the water tower, two other advisors spoke to Capt. Yonan after the firing and Yonan reported that he was not hit and planned to join the other advisors when it was safe to do so. Radio contact was maintained with Yonan until 0730 hours. The other U.S. advisors began escape and evasion operations from the beleaguered compound.

Team 22 Advisors Maj. George W. Carter, Maj. Julius G. Warmath, and Capt. John P. Keller, were extracted by helicopter. The aircraft was a UH1H from the 52nd Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group, (serial #69-15715) and was flown by Lt. James E. Hunsicker. WO Wade L. Ellen was the co-pilot of the chopper, and SP4 Charles M. Lea, and SP5 Ricky B. Bogle were crewmen. Other persons extracted included 1Lt. Johnny M. Jones, from the 52nd Aviation Battalion; SP4 Franklin Zollicoffer, from the U.S. Army Installation at Pleiku, and Sgt. Walter H. Ward, unit not specified.

The helicopter departed to the northwest from Dak To, but was apparently hit by enemy fire, as it crashed and burned on a small island in the Dak Poco River about 500 meters from the end of the dock to the runway. Because of the rolling terrain, personnel at the airfield did not see the aircraft impact. A pilot flying over the wreckage reported that the helicopter was burning, but they could see no survivors. It was later discovered that five people did survive the crash - Warmath, Keller, Bogle, Ward and Lea. According to their statements, Hunsicker, Ellen, Zollicoffer, Jones and Carter were all dead.

Two other Team 22, MACV Advisors, LtCol. Robert W. Brownlee and Capt. Charles W. Gordon, and their ARVN interpreter, Sgt. Cao Ky Chi, were in a bunker near the airstrip approximately 4 kilometers to the west of the base camp when they were forced to withdraw under heavy enemy attack. They proceeded south of the compound across the Dak Poco River, but LtCol. Brownlee became separated from the others as they were advancing up a hill. Sgt. Chi and Capt. Gordon called out to him, but received no response. From the top of the hill, Sgt. Chi heard the enemy call out to someone in Vietnamese to halt and raise their hands. Sgt. Chi believed the Viet Cong were speaking to LtCol. Brownlee. Gordon and Chi evaded capture and eventually made their way to safety.

A Vietnamese who was captured and subsequently released reported that he had talked to another prisoner who had witnessed LtCol. Brownlee's death. He was told that LtCol. Brownlee had killed himself with his own pistol when communist soldiers told him to raise his hands in an attempt to capture him. Additional hearsay reports of his suicide were reported by another ARVN source.

Yonan never caught up with the others. For three days, helicopter searches were made of the area with no success. Ground search, because of the hostile threat in the area, was not practical.

In April 1988, the Vietnamese "discovered" the remains of Capt. Kenneth J. Yonan and returned them to the U.S. in a spirit of stepped-up cooperation on the POW/MIA issue. For nearly 20 years, this 1969 West Point graduate was a prisoner of war - alive or dead. His family now knows with certainty that he is dead, but may never learn how - or when - he died.

In addition to the reports regarding Brownlee's death, a South Vietnamese soldier reported that he observed the capture of one "big" American from the camp. Another report described the capture of a U.S. Captain stationed at the camp.

Since the war ended, reports and refugee testimony have convinced many authorities that not only do the Vietnamese possess several hundred sets of Americans' remains, more startlingly, they also control hundreds of living American prisoners.

As long as they are allowed to do so, the Vietnamese will return remains at politically expedient intervals. As long as they are allowed to do so, they will hold our men prisoner.