

Pat,

I left your story on the B-board last night for my relief. I thought he would enjoy reading your story since he has a similar one that I've heard several times. When I got back to work this morning, he had a prepared statement that he wanted me to send out. He's old and doesn't see well anymore like us younger guys and may not make much sense, anyhow, here it is.....any spelling mistakes are his.....

Pat,

You asked if anybody ever heard of dropping fuel drums. I flew UH-1's with A Co 25th AVN BN out of Cu Chi in 1969. We flew a mission called "Flamebath". Ours was three 55 Gal drums of a mixture of JP-4 & Naptha, like homemade napalm. The drums were slung together sidewallike a pyramid with a trip flare attached to each barrel. The trip flare pins were wired together, and when the load was dropped the drums seperated and lit the flares. Instant fire when the drums hit and ruptured.

We normally dropped the mess from about 1200' as the target passed between the pedals and used it as an area weapon, but on Sep 7, 1969 a mech unit got into a shootout with a bunker complex 50 yds away through heavy brush. After 4 or 5 casualties they called us to give it a shot. The cobras didn't want to use rockets because of the tight quarters, and their mini-guns were ineffective from overhead. I was on standby that day and got the call. To make a long story shorter, I knew I couldn't drop the "Flamebath" from 1200', so I came in at 800', pulled the airspeed back to 50kts, and did my cheap imitation of a Stuka, punching off the load at 150' and an airspeed of what seemed like 200kts, but was probably only around 110. I was too busy with other things to notice. I missed the first two times and went back to Cu Chi to rearm, but we got a direct hit on the third try, and that was the end of the little skirmish. I wouldn't let the crewchief or gunner use their M-60's because the friendlies were too close, and the next day I heard rumblings about my sanity.

I wasn't nuts, I, like the rest of us, was just young (21) and invincible. Now that I'm 49, if somebody told me to do that today, I'd tell them to stick those trip flares in the bung hole.

John Driscoll
Little Bear 18