



BOLT STARTS BLAZE— YOSPIAM STOPS BLAZE

by: William C. Yarbrough SZ/LS20

"A single blistering bolt of lightning struck mobile refueler #3 (containing 115-145 octane helicopter fuel) at our Sam Thong, Laos, station such a hammering blow that a quantity of fuel was forced out of the equipment on to the ground under the refueler; it ignited instantly.

"Boonplod Yospiam, Air America's Thai POL Leadman at Sam Thong, immediately assessed the explosive possibilities of the situation since the refueler was then temporarily parked at Air America's POL dump. Instructing all other AAM personnel around to depart the area immediately, he raced 50 feet to fetch the



Mr. Boonplod Yospiam

first fire extinguisher he could get to and single-handedly smothered the growing blaze. His prompt and brave action certainly saved the refueler from damage—and possibly from total loss. Moreover, by eliminating the chance of refueler explosion, he protected the entire POL dump from possible disaster.

"Yospiam gave absolutely no thought to his own welfare—he exhibited courage and devotion to duty to AAM personnel and AAM equipment far and above any normal requirement.

"I was an eye witness to the above described incident."

Editor's note: With this account of quick action and staunch bravery, we welcome Sam Thong to our editorial pages. SZ/LS20 has assured us of a continuous supply of copy and pix from his picturesque outpost station.

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An Air America Bell 204B helicopter taking off from AAM's Base at Tan Son Nhut Airport, Saigon.

VIETNAM INCIDENT

by: George L. Christian, III—Editor

AAM's Bell 204B helicopter N8512F was working out of Tra Vinh, a village in the Mekong Delta recently. Crew was Captain H. L. Barker, First Officer H. F. Miller and Flight Mechanic G. Pettie.

The aircraft took off from the hamlet of Dai An at 1430L. It was about 100 meters northwest of the village perimeter on a course of 330° and at an altitude of approximately 150-200 feet when a 10-second burst of small arms fire chattered at the chopper. One round hit the machine's transmission, resulting in complete loss of oil pressure.

Captain Barker immediately sent out a "Mayday" and landed at his point of take-off. There were no injuries to the four customer passengers or the three Air America crew members aboard; nor was the helicopter damaged in landing.

The area was quickly secured by a PRU (Popular Reaction Unit) contingent.

Captain Barker's distress call was heard by another air America chopper pilot, Captain L. Luckett, who was flying his Bell 204B, N1307X, about 50 miles west of Dai An. His crew consisted of First Officer C. D. Kendall and Flight Mechanic

A. W. Null.

Captain Luckett instantly diverted to Dai An to evacuate the passengers and crew of 12F, arriving about 20 minutes after the distress call. En route to Dai An, he set up gun ships and fire support for the downed personnel. Because of his alertness, three Huey Cobra gun ships and two F-100 fighters arrived in the vicinity of Dai An about 15 minutes after 12F was damaged—before he himself arrived on the scene.

With a magnificent display of coordination, a CH-47 Chinook retriever chopper arrived from one spot (Can Tho) and a UH-1 Huey with the necessary retrieval rigging arrived from another spot (Vinh Long), one right after the other, permitting 12F to be lifted out of Dai An only one hour after it was forced down.

While 12F was being air-lifted to Can Tho, AAM/Saigon flew the required repair crew and parts to Can Tho in a 204B; the retrieval Chinook and maintenance 204B arrived simultaneously.

AAM crew chiefs Stanley Shim, Vernon Durham (Americans) and Francisco Bigay (a Filipino), repaired 12F and it was airborne again at 1730L—just three hours after it had been hit. A richly deserved "Well Done" to all hands.

Right to left are: Vernon Durham, Francisco Bigay and Stanley Shim, the AAM crew chiefs who repaired 12F. Far left is Richard Lister, Acting MFD/RW/SGN.

