

9 JUNE 72

1. General situation:

A. There was very little activity in the MR today. Elements of the 23rd Div continued patrolling and consolidating positions. There were no enemy contacts of any size and only a few enemy rounds were fired at the city. TF 21 continued preparations for the push down QL 14 scheduled for tomorrow. Other than sporadic contacts with VC units in Binh Dinh there was no major activity in that province. The weather was fair to good in PHU and KTM for most of the day, however, thunderstorms in the evening reduced visibility considerably in the area. During a period of marginal weather Mr Vann crashed near QL 14 between Pleiku and KTM.

B. It was relatively peaceful in KTM city today. The war permitted our A/C to start working early. Consolidation and clean up continues. The main effort today was logistical. Our CH-47s were able to work all day carrying ammo and food to KTM and bring-

ing wounded and refugees out. The PZ was well organized and it appears our refugee problem has been solved. One round of arty fire landed about 100 meters NW of the FOB pad just as a CH-47 was bringing in two POL blivets. The explosion blew one of the doors off and ^(emergency exit) caused the A/C to drop his load. KTRM airfield is operating well and except for minor maintenance difficulties the GCA is functioning properly tonight.

1. Small contacts between friendly forces and VC units continued in Binh Dinh Prov. No major operation took place and lucrative targets are becoming scarce. HTRP 10th Co. departed Binh Dinh prov. and arrived at HAAK late today.

2. Synopsis of operations:

A A/C commitments 42/14/18

West 15/8/5

CH 47	sorties	Load	Tons	Hours
East	72	292	88	14.3
West	123	1683	129.5	31.8

3. Air car operations:

A. H/17 car worked NW of UTM city. Fresh tank tracks were observed. The tracks led to what is believed to be a tank park at Z415 0990. The canopy was too thick to observe anything beneath it. Later in the day the troop located a group of 2 1/2 ton trucks at ZB 165130. Hawk's claw was launched to engage the targets, however, due to the vegetation none of the targets could be observed by the claw people. There was a delay getting TAC AIR, however, several sets of fighters were put in on the target later. Gunships and TAC Air destroyed five 2 1/2 ton trucks, an ARVN cache and several hooches. The Troop will return to the same location tomorrow to conduct a BDA.

B. H/10 worked in Binh Dinh most of the day. A suspected staging area was located at BR 8673. Several trucks, bunkers and fighting positions were observed as well as some NVA troops in blue uniforms. The area was attacked by TAC air. Results of

the strike are not known at this time. The troop came back to HAF late this afternoon and will work in support of TF 21 tomorrow.

4. Misc

A John Vann was killed this evening when his helicopter crashed at about 2130 hrs. Just prior ^{he} had hosted Gen. Hill's farewell dinner at the SRAO mess with all the senior staff members present. Gen. Toan and Bob Kingston were also there. Mr Vann made a tremendous thank you speech citing the years he had known Gen. Hill since they attended the advance inf. course together after Korea and the outstanding job Gen. Hill had done as his deputy during the recent heavy fighting. As we were standing around before dinner he told us that he was going to fly to UTM later in the evening and spend the night with the 23rd Div. He said that he had visited UTM everyday for the past thirty days and ~~to~~ that because he was in Saigon all day today he had not been able

to get up there and that he did not want to break his record now. At dinner he asked the sergeants to get some bags and clean all of the remaining fresh fruit off the tables so that he could take it to the advisors in KTM. He Gen Toan, Gen Hill, and Bob Kingston departed the mess immediately at the conclusion of dinner while the rest of us stayed for a short staff meeting regarding tomorrow's activities. That was the last time any of us saw MR VANN alive.

P. I left the mess and walked up to the helipad at Corps headquarters and took off in my helicopter for KTM. Our C130 resupply effort at KTM is highly critical and I wanted to be on the ground up there to observe our GCA controlling traffic and make sure there were no problems that we could prevent. I looked for MR VANN's helicopter as I took off thinking that we could fly up together for mutual support as we have done in the past. He got off too far ahead of me, however, and I was unable to locate

his chopper. The wx was not too good with broken to overcast at about 1500' to 2000' AGL and lightning in the clouds at a distance to the Northwest. I skirted the bases of the clouds and proceeded via Phai Mxong and the valley to KTM. Lower clouds could be seen obscuring the ridges and mountains along QL 14 to the East of my Route. I was busy navigating the wx and was not sure that Mr Vann had departed ahead of me so I did not try to raise him on any of the frequencies we were operating on.

C. When I landed at KTM I called the 23rd Div TOC on the radio and advised them that I was at the airfield checking on operations. Col. Rhotenberg told me that Mr. Vann had called in approx. 15 min earlier alerting them that he was coming in to land and was about 15 min. out. He said that he was worried because he had lost contact after that call and had been unable to raise the A/C again. He also had just

been advised by the TF 14 People (who have been trying to open the highway) That a helicopter had been observed to crash near FSD 41, VIC ZH 202704. I immediately took off and flew back to the area and in the meantime 17th group operations launched a search and rescue package. A VNAF Spooky and A-1 Spectre plus a covey FAC provided Flare illumination. The ARVN Task force immediately launched a ground operation to search the area where the crash had been observed. After about 30 min of combined effort by everyone involved a small fire was located in the general area where the crash was thought to have occurred. The gunships could not confirm the fire as being an aircraft since the flares provided insufficient illumination down into the dense jungle. The firefly searchlight ship was sent down and with his light was able to confirm that there was wreckage in the trees. By this time the ARVN ground troops were

quite close and they were vectored into the site from the air. They confirmed a crashed helicopter with three aboard. Jack Anderson went in with the SAR C+C ship and landed in a cleared area just adjacent to the site while the light ship continued to provide illumination. He had the ARVN bring MR VANN's body out and put it on his helicopter and the pilot's body (1LT Doughtie) was carried by the ARVN back to FB 41. The 3rd body, 1st Lt Robertson, a passenger, could not be removed from the wreckage and will be recovered by a team tomorrow morning.

P. As the bodies were being recovered I returned to SRAO headquarters and debriefed Gen Hill, Gen Toan and members of the Staff. Gen Hill and Gen Toan went to the hospital and made positive identification of MR VANN's body. Necessary calls were made to USARV and we were informed that Gen Hill would leave tomorrow on schedule and that Gen Healy would arrive tomorrow.

to replace Mr. VANN.

E. From the information available now it appears that Mr. VANN elected to fly directly up QL 14 to 47M instead of proceeding to the west via Plei Mung. Possibly he thought he could stay under the wx and guide on the road but this is pure conjecture. The AC was observed going from North to South when it crashed and the impact site indicates that it struck at a fairly high rate of speed going to the East. Supposition is that he had turned back for some reason and had started back down QL 14. No ground fire was observed by the troops in the area but no other real facts are known about the crash at this time.

F. Shock is great here in II Corps over Mr. VANN's death. Everyone with whom I have talked feels a deep sense of personal loss. As always, when these things occur, it is too soon yet to believe that it is really true. Our country has lost a devoted servant and real

patriot and the Vietnamese have
lost a true friend and
staunch champion. As Gen. Hill
commented, however, and I agree,
Mr Vann died as he would have
wanted to die - flying, which
he loved, and deeply involved
in the advisory effort to which he
had devoted so much of his life.