

STATEMENT

On 17 January 1969, I was flying as Aircraft Commander on an unarmed helicopter of the 189th AHC. We were stand-by, working out of Dak To with the "King Bee," CH-34 helicopters of VNAF. We were scrambled to insert a platoon into a classified area west of Dak To. CPT Nguyen Quy An was "King Bee Lead." He and his 2 helicopters were to insert the bulk of the platoon while I and CPT Stratiff were to insert the remaining 6 men. CPT An and his crew, LT Vu Tung, pilot, and WO Nguyen Quang Hien, crewchief, lead the flight into the LZ. As they approached the lip of the bomb crater clearing they came under fire and notified the rest of the flight as to the direction the fire was coming from. After the CH-34 had made their departure, we were on short final to the LZ. After making the insertion without incident and began to hover out, we were informed not to break over the dirt road off to the right of the LZ because of recent enemy movement and vehicular traffic. As we broke left and were still in a left hand turn, we were struck by what was later determined to be an enemy 37mm round. It struck our fuel cell, cutting hydraulic fluid lines and we caught fire. It was only a few seconds before we had a "King Bee" helicopter off our right side. It was CPT An who had made a high-speed dive to aid our burning slick. As we were searching for a forced landing area, CPT An called me on the radio and informed me that a possible landing area was about 5 K's to the northwest. At this time he was vectoring the gunships toward us. As we came upon the proposed LZ, CPT An was right next to us. He saw (as did we) that the stumps and trees would not allow even a reasonably safe landing. CPT An then maneuvered his ship so as to prevent our landing and at the same time he informed me that if we could reach the flat land on the other side of the ridgeline, that we could find a better area. At this time I could see that we had to get to one as quickly as possible, because we had lost from 1,000 down to 200 lbs of fuel in less than 4 minutes. We found a good LZ and started the approach, on my right wing CPT An was making his approach at the same time. We landed and left our burning aircraft, taking all radios and crew served weapons. We finally made our way through the 15 foot high elephant grass. CPT An's crewchief, WO Hien was cutting his way toward us. As we met, he helped get the equipment and all of the crew people aboard. After we were safely aboard, CPT An and LT Tung made their take-off.

I feel, that if it was not for their gallant actions, I would not be alive today. I highly recommend CPT An, LT Tung and WO Hien for American Valor awards.

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