

“Vietnam – Air Losses”

United States Air Force
Navy and Marine corps
Fixed-Wing Aircraft Losses
In Southeast Asia 1961-1973

By: Chris Hobson

Midland Publishing

(re-printed with permission)

24 December 1972

A-7E 157503 VA-113 USN USS Ranger

LT Phillip Spratt CLARK (KIA)

Three Navy Corsairs set off for a daylight mining mission on the Chateau Renaud Channel near Hon Gay. Low cloud and poor visibility meant that each aircraft had to make its own individual run to drop its mines rather than making the drop in formation in a single pass. As the last aircraft started its run the pilot saw a parachute descending through the clouds moments after LT Clark reported that he had dropped his ordnance. LT Clark came down in the sea about five miles south of Cam Pha and made three radio transmissions to the aircraft overhead. His emergency beeper was also heard several times but LT Clark did not survive. Search and rescue efforts were frustrated by bad weather and approaching darkness. Whether he drowned or was killed during capture is not known. The mortal remains of LT Clark were returned to the USA on 3 November 1988.

A force of 30 B-52s from U-Tapan flew missions over North Vietnam on Christmas Eve, striking railway yards at Thai Nguyen and Kep. Improved tactics including an overland approach over Laos and splitting the waves both in and out of the target area resulted in all the bombers emerging from North Vietnam virtually unscathed. The second of two Mig-21s to fall to a B-52 gunner (A1C Albert Moore of Ruby 3) was shot down during the raid.

MEYERKORD (DE-1058) WHEN A SAR ALERT WAS SOUNDED.

AN A-7 PILOTED BY LT CLARK OF VA-113 EMBARKED ON RANGER WAS DOWNED BY ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE IN THE VICINITY OF CAT BA ABOUT 14 MILES EAST OF THE HAIPHONG COMPLEX. LTS DEWHIRST AND RAMSEY AND CREWS LAUNCHED AND WERE ORBITTING IN THE VICINITY OF GRAND NORWAY ISLAND AWAITING CLEARANCE FROM CTG 77.0. LT RAMSEY HAD REACHED A MINIMUM FUEL STATE AND WOULD HAVE TO REFUEL WITHIN THE NEXT 20 MINUTES. CONSEQUENTLY CTU 77.0.0 REQUESTED LCDR WALSH AND CREW TO PROCEED TO THE SCENE. SECNAV AND CINCPACFLT WERE INFORMED OF THE NEED AND INSTANTLY GAVE THE SAR EFFORT A HIGHER PRIORITY. "BIG MOTHER" DEPARTED WITH "DUSTY DOG" ASSUMING THE VIP TRANSFER. IT WAS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE "BIG MOTHER" ESCORT DEVELOPED A JAMMED HOIST AND A UTILITY HYDRAULIC SYSTEMS FAILURE DURING AND AFTER THE TRANSFER SO THE VIP MISSION WAS ABORTED. HOWEVER, THE MISSION WAS AGAIN RESUMED ON CHRISTMAS DAY BUT THIS TIME IT WAS COMPLETED SUCCESSFULLY BY A "BIG MOTHER". THE AREA WHERE LT CLARK WAS LOCATED WAS WITHIN A MAZE OF SMALL ISLANDS AND THE CEILING WAS 250-300 FT. AGL. LCDR WALSH AND CREW RELIEVED LT RAMSEY WHILE THE PROTECTIVE COVER OF RESCAP REMAINED ABOVE THE OVERCAST. FINALLY THE CLEARANCE WAS GIVEN TO PROCEED. THE FLIGHT OF TWO "BIG MOTHERS" WORKED ITS WAY THROUGH THE MAZE WHILE RESCAP DROPPED WELL BELOW THE OVERCAST TO GIVE VISUAL VECTORS. COMMUNICATIONS SEEMED TO BE JAMMED ON ALL FREQUENCIES AND RESCAP AIRCRAFT CONTINUED THEIR LOW PASSES TO PROVIDE VISUAL VECTORS. THE FLIGHT PROCEEDED FOR ABOUT 10 MILES UNOPPOSED WHEN THE SAR WAS TERMINATED. LT CLARK COULD NOT BE VISUALLY LOCATED DESPITE LOW PASSES BY THE ON SCENE COMMAND AND RESCAP ENCOUNTERED ENEMY FIRE AHEAD OF THE "BIG MOTHERS" FLIGHT PATH. WHEN THE FLIGHT REVERSED COURSE TO EGRESS THE AREA IT CAME UNDER FIRE FROM SHORE

POSITIONS. HOWEVER, DUE TO LOW CEILINGS, POOR VISIBILITY, AND DARKNESS, THE ENEMY FIRE WAS INEFFECTIVE BUT THAT WAS OF LITTLE CONSOLATION, FOR THE DISAPPOINTMENT FELT BY BOTH CREWS IN NOT RESCUING LT CLARK ON CHRISTMAS EVE WAS VERY KEEN. AN IFR APPROACH, TERMINATING IN A NIGHT DLG LANDING, ENDED 9.5 HOURS OF FLIGHT TIME FOR THE OINC AND CREW.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, A ONE DAY TRUCE WAS DECLARED AND THE DETACHMENT CELEBRATED BY POSITIONING ONLY TWO AIRCRAFT ON SAR. MEANWHILE, BACK ON AMERICA, THE OINC CONSULTED WITH CAG IN AN ATTEMPT TO HEAL THE WOUNDS CREATED BY THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE 23RD. CAG STATED THE TIME WAS RIGHT FOR ANOTHER MEETING WITH THE CAPTAIN AND LCDR WALSH ONCE AGAIN MADE THAT LONG TRIP TO THE BRIDGE. THE RECEPTION THIS TIME WAS CORDIAL AND CONGRATULATORY WITH THE "BIG MOTHERS" RECEIVING NOTHING BUT PRAISE. THE OINC DEPARTED THE BRIDGE KNOWING THAT AT LEAST A MORAL VICTORY WAS SCORED.

26-31 DECEMBER 1972

USS SARATOGA

ON 26 DECEMBER, HC-7 DET 110 CROSSED DECKED TO THE SARATOGA. GONE WERE THE DAYS OF THE FLIGHT DECK CREWS ATTEMPTING TO MOVE THE AIRCRAFT WITH THE TIE DOWNS STILL ATTACHED. NO MORE WAITING FOR AS LONG AS 35 MINUTES FOR A MANNED HELICOPTER TO BE RESPOTTED. THE SARA WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO TURN DURING ENGAGEMENT. THE WINDS WOULD BE CALLED CORRECTLY AND WITHIN PROPER PARAMETERS FOR LAUNCH AND ABOVE ALL SARATOGA HAD OPERATED UNDER THE CV CONCEPT. ONCE AGAIN QUARTERS WERE CRAMPED BUT THEN SO WAS EVERYONE'S, AND THE "BIG MOTHERS" JOINED SARA'S CROWDED BUT HAPPY FAMILY. RELATIONS WERE EXCELLENT AND AIROPS COULD BE DEPENDED UPON TO ESTABLISH HARD AND FAST LAUNCH TIMES WITH ONLY MINOR DEVIATIONS FROM THE AIR PLAN.

DESPITE THE WARM RELATIONS EXPERIENCED ON THE SARATOGA, THE WAR AND 5 MINUTE ALERTS WENT ON AS USUAL, AND THE "BIG MOTHERS" DEMONSTRATED THAT THE

DECK LOG—REMARKS SHEET

USS RANGER (CVA-61) ZONE DESCRIPTION -8 14 DATE SUNDAY, 24 DECEMBER, 1972
(Day) (Date) (Month)
AT/PASSAGE FROM GULF OF TONKIN TO _____

POSITION	ZONE	TIME
0800		
L 18° 40.0' N	BY 2, 4	
λ 107° 22.0' E	BY 2, 4	

POSITION	ZONE	TIME
1200		
L 18° 37.2' N	BY 2, 4	
λ 107° 09.2' E	BY 2, 4	

POSITION	ZONE	TIME
2000		
L 18° 53.0' N	BY 2, 4	
λ 107° 15.0' E	BY 2, 4	

LEGEND: 1-CELESTIAL
2-ELECTRONIC
3-VISUAL
4-D. R.

REMARKS

00-04 STEAMING IN COMPANY WITH USS LAWE (DD-763) IN ACCORDANCE WITH COMSEVENTHFLT OPERATION SCHEDULE FOR SECOND QUARTER FY '73, AND CTF 77 RECAP MESSAGE 181615Z DEC 72. USS LAWE IS STEAMING INDEPENDENTLY WITHIN VISUAL SIGNALING RANGE. SODA IS COMCARDIV THREE, EMBARKED IN USS RANGER. OTC IS COMMANDING OFFICER, USS RANGER. MATERIAL CONDITION YOKE AND CONDITION OF READINESS V ARE SET. THE SHIP IS ON 3 SHAFT OPERATIONS WITH #2 SHAFT UNLOCKED. PRESENT COURSE IS 000°, SPEED 10 KNOTS. 0019 C/C 180°. 0200 C/C 000°. 0300 C/C 340°. 0311 C/C 000°. 0325 C/C 340°.

D.P. Howe

D.P. HOWE, LT, USN

04-08 UNDERWAY AS BEFORE. 0540 C/C 140°. 0551 C/S 15 KTS. 0552 C/C 290°. 0613 RECEIVED SHIP'S DAILY DRAFT REPORT. DISPLACEMENT 79,908 TONS. DRAFT FWD 35'8", AFT 37'4". 0655 C/S 10 KTS. 0704 C/C 130°. 0707 C/S 15 KTS. 0718 C/S 20 KTS. 0725 COMMENCED FLIGHT OPERATIONS FOR THIS DATE. MANEUVERING ON VARIOUS COURSES AND SPEEDS WHILE CONDUCTING FLIGHT OPS.

W.P. Cooper

W.P. COOPER, LT, USN

08-12 UNDERWAY AS BEFORE. 0904 THE HONORABLE JOHN W. WARNER, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY CAME ABOARD. BROKE THE FLAG OF THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY. ADMIRAL BERNARD CLAREY, USN, CINCPACFLT CAME ABOARD IN COMPANY WITH THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY. 1019 THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY, AND CINCPACFLT DEPARTED THE SHIP. HAULED DOWN THE FLAG OF THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY. 1145 COMCARDIV SEVEN ARRIVED ON BOARD.

L. Marchant

L. MARCHANT, LT, USNR

12-16 UNDERWAY AS BEFORE. 1320 RECEIVED SHIP'S DAILY MUSTER REPORT. NO NEW ABSENTEES, NO DELETIONS. 1338 COMCARDIV SEVEN DEPARTED THE SHIP.

D.V. Gould

D.V. GOULD, LTJG, USN

16-20 UNDERWAY AS BEFORE. 1615 VA-113 ALT, SIDE NUMBER 314, PILOTED BY LT PHILLIP SPRATT, CLARK, JR., USN, REPORTED DOWN WHILE CONDUCTING FLIGHT OPERATIONS. 1900 COMPLETED SCHEDULED A/R OPERATIONS FOR THE DAY. SET COURSE 155°, SPEED 18 KNOTS. 1945 (APPROX) SEARCH AND RESCUE EFFORTS TO RECOVER LT CLARK OF VA-113 CALLED OFF DUE TO DARKNESS. LT CLARK NOT FOUND, LISTED AS MISSING IN ACTION. CTF 77 SAR SITREP FOR 24 DEC 72 REFERS.

D.P. Howe

D.P. HOWE, LT, USN

20-24 UNDERWAY AS BEFORE

EXAMINED

M.K. Peery CDR

U. S. N. NAVIGATOR

TO BE FORWARDED TO THE BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL AT THE END OF EACH MONTH