

AFEHRI File 19-5-1-20

Research Materials/Source Documents

FILE TITLE: Air Force Cross Recipient: CMSgt Richard L. Etchberger

Reviewed by:

AFEHRI Representative *G.R. Akin* date 7 JUN 98

EPC Representative *Joe C. [unclear]* date 22 Jun 98

Scanner Operator *Matt Miletto Scansica* date 22 Jun 98
hcv

APPROVED BY:

Gary R. Akin

GARY R. AKIN, CMSgt, USAF
Director
Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute

losses, 1 USN loss, and 1 USMC loss. Monthly kill ratio is 42.3 to 1.

There was a record 65 mortar/rocket attacks on air facilities in-country this month. The combined services lost 53 aircraft while another 344 aircraft were damaged.

Operation NIAGARA II continued through the month with the USAF flying 3942 tactical and 1070 B-52 sorties in its support. Total in-country attack sorties by all services increased to 19,182. This increased activity provided a significant rise in destruction and damage over January's rates. Secondary explosions increased 16.7% while military structures destroyed increased 125.8%. Sampans destroyed rose 73.5% and KBA totals jumped 138.6% for a new record of 1744.

B-52s flew a record 1459 sorties of which 1291 were in SVN and 168 were in Laos. The overfly of the 1200 sortie per month program was in response to Operation BUGLE NOTE.

Visual reconnaissance (VR) sorties dropped 29.5% for a total of 1181 sightings. 253 immediate air strikes (8% of the total) were in response to VR sightings.

The 6057 attack sorties flown in Laos this month is 25% less than January's effort; however, the decrease is partly attributed to the extensive effort put forth in defense of Khe Sanh, RVN.

Regardless of the reduction in the total strike sortie effort in Laos, strikes in the Barrel Roll area totaled 995 this month for a 25% increase over January. Enemy strong points in the Lima Site 85 area were the principal targets.



A

In the northeast, the Communists are making a major effort to take Phou Pha Thi, the location of Site 85 at 2026N 10344E and a strategic Royal Laotian Army guerrilla base. The enemy has gradually reduced the outer defense perimeter to a point where it is within heavy mortar range. The enemy has continued his westward movement by extending Route 602 to a point penetrating the 12 kilometers defensive perimeter surrounding Phou Pha Thi. On 20 February, the enemy overran Muong Yut about seven kilometers southeast of the crest at Phou Pha Thi and then spread one battalion along the ridge line northeast back to Phou Houay Hao. On 21 February, four enemy battalions arrived at Phou Den Din. Friendly efforts to secure Site 85 include augmentation of troops and artillery. Additionally, 50 irregulars, a 105mm howitzer, and two heavy mortars have been added to its defense forces. Military Region 2 Commander, General Vang Pao, has also initiated small patrols to locate targets for air strikes. Such targets have been reported east of San Neua. On 21 February, aircraft struck and cut the new road extension along Route 602.^{2/}

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT PERTAINING TO SITE 85

In view of an anticipated enemy attack against Lima Site 85 (UH6860) the Laos Rules of Engagement^{3/} were amplified as follows:

1. Any target can be struck under FAC control within 1km circle around site.

^{1/} 7AF WAIS, 9 Mar 68

^{2/} Laos Rules of Engagement will be found in entirety in Oct 67 of this publication.

~~TOP SECRET~~

2. Any target in 12 km circle of Lima Site 85 can be struck under Commando Club providing:

a. Target is 500 meters from known friendly villages or -
b. Local area Defense Commander at site working in conjunction with TSQ-81 Commander, has validated target.

3. Local area Defense Commander has authority to divert Commando Club strikes to targets that he can validate within 12 km of site.

4. Route segment eastward from Phou Den Din 10 km along Route 602 can be struck under FAC or Commando Club.

5. No restrictions on use of gravel/CBUs along 10 km segment of Route 602 eastward out of Phou Den Din.

6. Gravel and CBUs can be used within 12 km circle of site in areas validated by local area Defense Commander when major ground attacks are imminent and when 500 meters from friendly villages.

7. Commando Club strikes are to be conducted under secure voice but can go clear if major attack is in progress within 12 km circle and authorized by AMEMB, Vientiane.

8. CAS/AIRA will recommend 5 to 10 priority targets be fragged in support of Site 85 each 24 hours.

BARREL ROLL AIR STRIKE ACTIVITY

Barrel Roll attack sorties flown increased from last month's 798 to 995 during February (+25%). The rise is reflected in the 174% increase in Commando Club (CC) sorties flown which total 417 compared to January's 152.

[REDACTED]

circular error average (CEA) is 311'; the majority of attacks being accomplished by F-105 and F-4 aircraft. Approximately 50% of the bomb runs were against enemy strong points in the vicinity of Lima Site 85. 21 A-1Es participated in 14 CC bomb runs. A-1E pilots scored an aggregate 157' CEA. Pilots of 10 A-26s participating in 6 bomb runs scored an aggregate 346' CEA. All of the above CEA's were scored electronically.

SIGNIFICANT BDA BARREL ROLL

2-8 Feb: Primary targets struck were storage areas, truck parks and interdiction points. Pilots reported 57 structures destroyed in strikes in Xieng Khouang Province. Other BDA for the week included 37 secondary explosions, 80 secondary fires, 5 road cuts, and 1 AW site damaged. During this period, pilots reported sighting 34 trucks.

9 Feb: 12 F-105s struck a truck park storage area near Route 61. Pilots estimated 7 storage structures destroyed and observed 11 secondary explosions and 18 fires.

13-19 Feb: USAF pilots flew 230 strike sorties against enemy troop concentrations, gun positions, LOCs, truck parks, storage areas and bivouac areas. Pilots reported 7 secondary explosions, 7 secondary fires, 6 road cuts and 2 gun positions destroyed or damaged. Lack of BDA as compared to the high sortie rate reflects the high

~~SECRET~~ ~~SECRET~~

number of sorties flown under Commando Club for which no BDA was possible and more than 50 sorties diverted to work with FACs where tree canopy, dust and smoke precluded accurate assessment.

28 Feb: 2 bulldozers were struck and probably destroyed by an A-26 at 2012N-10400E.

29 Feb: 8 F-4Cs struck a truck park/storage area at 2024N - 20357E causing 55 secondary explosions.

BARREL ROLL TARGET ELEMENT DESTROYED AND DAMGED*

	<u>Total Sorties</u>	<u>(Nite)</u>	<u>Veh</u>	<u>Bldgs</u>	<u>Road Cuts</u>	<u>AA Site</u>	<u>Sec Expl</u>
USAF	995	56	10	56	44	6	51

*SOURCE: BDA - OPREP-4
Sorties Flown - OPREP-5

NORTH LAOS ENEMY LOCs

2800 vehicles sighted during the month by Roadwatch Teams (RWT), photo recce and pilots is a 74% increase compared to 1610 sighted in January. The increase is attributed to increased number of RWTs. Pilots actually saw fewer vehicles than last month (64 vs 118). 62 of the 64 trucks observed by pilots were attacked, resulting in 6 destroyed and 1 probably destroyed. No action was taken on 8 photo recce and 2728 RWT observations due to the lapsed time in reporting.

Dr. Timothy Neil Castle
8843 Estebury Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80920
Tel/Fax 719-282-9622

February 6, 1995

Colonel Richard S. Rauschkolb
Commander
AFHRA
600 Chennault Circle
Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6424

*M/Sgt Spink
Bany-- Some
info for you.*


Dear Dick

Again, I wanted to express my appreciation to you and your staff for a very pleasant and useful visit. Enclosed is a copy of the NBC program on LS85. As you will see, we had extraordinary access to Laos and Hanoi. I should point out, however, that NBC took some dramatic license in claiming "to have solved" the fate of the eleven MIA. Also, the Vietnamese general who claims to have commanded the attacking forces was later determined to be a fraud.

I have also enclosed some documentation on CMSgt Etchberger for SMSgt Spink. CMSgt Etchberger was killed by a single bullet as the Air America rescue helicopter pulled away from the mountain. Etchberger received the AF Cross in a secret Pentagon ceremony and, as SMSgt Spink and I discussed, is not carried on the list published by the AF Sergeant's Association.

Still no definitive word on a reporting date to the Defense PW/MIA office - hope it comes soon. Will keep you informed. Many thanks and all best wishes,


TIMOTHY N. CASTLE, Ph.D.