

SUMMARY OF A-6 LOSSES: compiled from VIETNAM AIR LOSSES, USAF / USN / USMC Fixed Wing Aircraft Losses in SE Asia 1961-1973 by Chris Hobson; and Grumman Aircraft Corporation summary of Destroyed A-6 Aircraft, Reissued January 1992.

Forward by Capt Jerry Coffee, USN (ret) a Vietnam POW

One night during a bombing raid on Hanoi, I peeked out of my cell and watched a flight of four F-105s during their bombing run. As they pulled up, it was obvious that lead was badly hit. Trailing smoke, he broke from the formation and I watched the damaged bird until it disappeared from sight. I presumed the worst.

As I lay there in my cell reflecting on the image, I composed a toast to the unfortunate pilot and all the others who had gone before him.

On New Year's Eve 1968, Captain Tom Storey and I were in the Stardust section of Hoa Lo (wa-low) Prison. I whispered the toast under the door to Tom. Tom was enthralled, and despite the risk of terrible punishment, insisted that I repeat it several more times until he had it committed to memory. He then promised me that when the time came, and we were again free men, he would give the toast at the first dining-in he attended. [For you civilians, a dining-in is a dreary formal affair with drinks, dinner, and forced joviality and comradeship where officers get to dress up like the head waiters in "The Merry Widow" -- that's the American version; I've heard that the Brits, who created the damn things, have a rollicking good time.

Tom's first assignment following release in 1973 was to the U.S. Air Force Academy. During that same year the Academy hosted the Annual Conference of General Officers and Those Associated Dining In. ... The jovial clinking of glasses accompanied all the traditional speeches and toasts.

Then it was Tom's turn. Remembering his promise so many years earlier, he proposed Jerry's "One More Roll." When he was finished there was total silence.

**We toast our hearty comrades  
Who have fallen from the skies,  
And were gently caught by God's own hands  
To be with him on high,  
To dwell among the soaring clouds  
They have known so well before,  
From victory roll to tail chase  
At heavens very door.**

**And as we fly among them there,  
We're sure to hear their plea:  
Take care, my friend,  
Watch your six,  
And do one more roll for me.**

## SUMMARY:

VA-75 Sunday Punchers, USS Independence, 14 July 1965, BuNo 151584  
LT Don Boecker / LT Don Eaton (both recovered)  
Daylight / Steel Tiger Laos / Premature Bomb Burst

VA-75, 18 July 1965, # 151577  
CDR Jerry Denton, Air Wing OpsO / LTJG Bill Tschudy (both POW)  
Daylight / near Thanh Hoa / Premature Bomb Burst (both released 12 Feb 1973)

VA-75, 24 July 1965, #151585  
LCDR Deke Bordone / LTJG P F Moffett (both survived)  
Daylight / Steel Tiger S. Laos / Premature Bomb Burst

VA-75, 17 Sept 1965, #151588  
CO CDR Fred Vogt / LT Frank Barber (both KIA)  
Night, SE of Haiphong, Flew into the water on the bomb run.

VA-85 Black Falcons / Buckeyes, USS Kitty Hawk, 21 Dec 1965, BuNo 151781  
CO CDR Billie Jack Cartwright / LT Edward Frank Gold (both KIA)  
Night, near Haiphong, Flew into the ground avoiding SAMs (Gold's remains ID'd in 1995)

VA-85, 18 Feb 1966, #151797  
LTJG Joe Murray / LTJG Tom Schroeffel (both KIA)  
Day Armed Recce, 70mi W of Hanoi, Flew into ground beyond target

VA-85, 17 April 1966, #151794  
LCDR Sam Sayers / LCDR C J Hawkins (both survived)  
Armed Recce, near Mui Ron Ma, AAA hit in wing, ensuing fire, ejected at sea & rescued.

VA-85, 21 April 1966, #151798  
CO CDR Jack Keller / LCDR Ernie Austin (both KIA)  
Night, near Vinh, shot down or flew into ground

VA-85, 22 April 1966, #151785  
LCDR Robert Franklin Weimorts / LTJG Wm Brewster Nickerson (both KIA)  
Day (hazy), Iron Hand near Vinh, flew into the sea

VA-85, 27 April 1966, #151788  
LT Bill Westerman / LT Brian Westin ([awarded Navy Cross](#)), (both ejected & survived)  
Day, Near Vinh, Nape run on barges, small arms fire hit pilot, B/N flew A/C seaward, crew successfully ejected & B/N was picked up first. When the rescue helo was unable to pick up the pilot, the B/N went back into water to get his pilot into the rescue sling and then motioned the helo away towarded medical attention for the pilot, remaining behind in shark-infested

waters.

VA-85, 15 May 1966, #151800

LCDR R G Blackwood / LCDR John Cooley Ellison (both survived)  
Armed Recce in NVN, unable to take fuel from tanker, fuel exhaustion  
(LCDR Ellison was KIA on a raid at Bac Giang on 24 March 1967)

VA-65 Tigers, USS Constellation, 25 June 1966, BuNo 151816

LT Dick Weber (survived) / LTJG Charles Marik (KIA)  
Day raid on Hoi Thuong Barracks near Vinh, hit by AAA ejected at sea

VA-65, 27 Aug 1966, #151822

LCDR Jack Fellowes / LTJG Geprge Coker (both POW, both released 4 Mar 1973)  
Day VisOrd, bridge near Vinh, AAA hit with wing fire, ejected over land  
LTJG Coker one of few to escape a POW camp, was recaptured a day later and tortured for it.  
He received the Navy Cross, the Legion of Merit, and the Bronze Star with Combat V for his heroic actions while a POW.

VA-85, USS Kitty Hawk, 19 Jan 1967, BuNo 151590

XO CDR Allen Brady (POW) / LCDR Bill Yarbrough (KIA, remains returned Aug 1985)  
Day VisOrd, near Thanh Hoa, hit by AAA, aircraft blew up, chute failure for Yarbrough

VMA(AW)-242 Bats, MAG-11, DaNang Air Base, 23 Mar 1967, BuNo 152608

Capt Fred Cone USMC / CWO-3 Doug Wilson USMC, both survived, amazingly enough.  
A-6 on night T/O roll hit a C-141 loaded with acetylene at midfield, A-6 fully loaded with MK-82s and rockets went upside down, 5 USAF KIA with only 1 survivor on the C-141. Then-Major Cone received the Navy Cross for a later mission on Phuc Yen airfield in October.

VA-85, 24 Mar 1967, #151587

LCDR John Ellison / LTJG Jim Plowman (both listed KIA in 1980 for admin purposes)  
Night 4-plane strike on Bac Giang thermal power plant near Kep, aircraft disappeared off E-2 scope after target was hit, one or both may have been captured, a mystery to this day

VMA(AW)-242, MAG-11, DaNang, 17 Apr 1967, #152609

Maj Jim McGarvey / Capt Jim Carlton (both KIA)  
Night attack on transshipment point near Vinh, AAA or ground collision suspected

VA-85, 24 Apr 1967, #152589

LTJG Irv Williams / LTJG Mike Christian (both POW, released 4 March 1973)  
Day strike on Kep airfield MIG base, AAA hits to wing, ejected over land. Christian made American flags out of bits of cloth and was nearly tortured to death for his actions.

VA-35 Black Panthers, USS Enterprise, 19 May 1967, BuNo 152594

LCDR Red McDaniel (POW) / LT James Kelly Patterson (alive on ground, whereabouts

unknown to this day)

Day, three-CV Alpha-strike planned on targets around Hanoi, A/C hit by SAM, both ejected, 6 aircraft & 10 Navy aircrew were lost on this day, two from each Carrier.

VA-196 Main Battery, USS Constellation, 21 Aug 1967, BuNo 152638

CO CDR Leo Profilet / LCDR Bill Hardman, on their 59<sup>th</sup> mission together, (both POW)

Day strike, Duc Noi RR Yard 5 mi NE of Hanoi, SAM hit a wing and wing departed aircraft.

Both released 14 Mar 1973. Profilet had flown 98 combat missions in the Skyraider in Korea.

VA-196, 21 August 1967, #152627

LTJG Dain Scott / LTJG George Trembley (both KIA)

same Duc Noi RR Yard, chased by MIGs into China, shot down by MIG-19 in China.

VA-196, 21 Aug 1967, #152625

LCDR Jimmy Lee Buckley (KIA) / LT Bob Flynn (POW)

same Duc Noi RR Yard, chased by MIGs into China, shot down by MIG-19 in China.

Flynn spent 2,030 consecutive days in solitary confinement, repatriated through Hong Kong on

15 Mar 1973. Buckley's ashes were returned on 15 Dec 1975. Only one of the four Milestone

Intruders on the strike that day made it back to the Connie.

VMA(AW)-533 Hawks, MAG-12, Chu Lai, 26 Aug 1967, #152639. Sqdn arrived 1 Apr 1967

Major Val Bacik / Capt. Pat Boggs (both KIA)

Night strike near Hon Gay, hit by AAA over target, or crashed exiting target area.

VMA(AW)-242, MAG-11 DaNang, 30 Oct 1967, #152601

Capt. Hugh Fanning / Capt. Steve Kott (both KIA)

2-plane Night strike on Canal des Rapides bridge, 5 mi NE of Hanoi. Seeding mission with

MK-36 DST Destructor mines (MK-82s with special fuses). Bright flash on ground observed

by ECM aircraft, SE of Hanoi exiting target area. Exact cause unknown, AAA or hit ground.

VA-196, 2 Nov 1967, #152629

LCDR Richard David Morrow / LT James Joseph Wright (both KIA)

Failed to return from night, DST seeding mission. Intense AAA and SAM activity noted near

Van La, 10 mi S of Hanoi. Fireball observed on ground.

VMA(AW)-242. MAG-11 DaNang, 25 Nov 1967, #152612

CO LtCol. Lew Abrams / 1<sup>st</sup> LT Bob Holdeman (both KIA)

Night strike on Kien An airfield near Haiphong. Remains returned on 27 June 1997, after

excavation of crash site in 1993 & 1995. Abrams received Navy Cross for earlier mission.

VA-75, USS Kitty Hawk, 31 Dec 1967, #152917

LCDR John Pearce / LT Sam Perisho (both KIA)

Day, IFR single-plane strike on storage caves near Vinh. Heavy AAA & SAMs in area.

VMA(AW)-533, MAG-12 Chu Lai, 18 Jan 1968, #152636  
Major Hobart Wallace / Capt. Pat Murray (both KIA)  
Night strike on Vinh Yen, 20 mi NW of Hanoi. Shot down or crashed in target area.

VA-165 Boomers, USS Ranger, 23 Jan 1968, BuNo 152932  
CDR L S Kollmorgen (survived) / LCDR Gerald Lee Ramsden (KIA)  
Night, low-level ingress to target, flew into water 25 mi short of the target. Pilot ejected successfully, B/N did not eject. The USS Pueblo was seized by N. Korea on this day, and USS Enterprise was diverted there, instead of Yankee Station for her third cruise.

VA-165, 26 Jan 1968, #152901  
LCDR Buzz Eidsmoe / LT Mike Dunn (both KIA)  
Night, low level, single-plane to Vinh Airfield. Crash site found in target area, cause unknown.

VMA(AW)-242 MAG-11 DaNang, 30 Jan 1968, #152588  
Strike Damage (direct hit on DT-08) due to rocket attack on Air Base. 3 F-4s and 1 A-6 destroyed and 25 aircraft damaged. It is believed the NVA opened the 122mm rocket attack 24 hours early, before their official start of Tet '68 was planned to begin the next day.

VMA(AW)-533 MAG-12 Chu Lai, 23 Feb 1968, #152631  
Capt. Larry Pabin / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. R. V. Smith (both survived, water rescue)  
Night mid-air with F-8. A-6 was on GCI RTB Chu Lai (hit near DaNang). F-8 pilot was KIA

VMA(AW)-533 MAG-12 Chu Lai, 24 Feb 1968, #152644  
Major Jerry Marvel / Capt. Larry Friese (both POW, both released 14 Mar 1973)  
Night strike on Hoa Loc airfield, 17 mi W of Hanoi, likely SAM hit. Friese evaded capture for 4 days. He also rode an imaginary bicycle and taught Russian while in captivity.

VA-35, USS Enterprise, 28 Feb 1968, BuNo 152938  
LCDR Henry Albert Coons / LT Tom Stegman (both KIA, impacted water)  
Lost on night strike mission on Bai Thong airfield, S of Haiphong. Positive ID of aircraft debris 20 mi off coast near Thanh Hoa the next morning.

VA-35, 1 Mar 1968, #152944  
LCDR Tom Scheurich / LTJG Rich Lannom (both KIA)  
Night strike on Cam Pha military barracks, no trace of aircraft or crew found, cause unknown.

VA-75, USS Kitty Hawk, 6 Mar 1968, BuNo 152922  
LT Richard Nelson / LT Gilbert Louis Mitchell (both KIA)  
Night low-level strike on Haiphong RR yard. Radio Hanoi reported the shoot down the next morning with film of the wreckage. LT Nelson's remains were returned on 1 July 1984.

VA-35, 12 March 1968, #152943  
CO CDR Glenn Edward Kollman / LT John Gary Griffith (both KIA)

Night, IFR launch. A/C pitched up off the cat & spun into sea. Suspect slat malfunction.

VA-35, 16 Mar 1968, #152940

LCDR Edwin Arthur Shuman / Lcdr Dale Doss (both POW, released 14 Mar 1973)

Monsoon season had only the A-6 going across the beach. No other Navy aircraft had been lost since mid-Feb. VA-35 lost 4 aircraft and 3 crews in a little over two weeks.

Night, low-level strike on Khe Nu RR yard. Aircraft hit by AAA N of Hanoi, crew ejected and were immediately captured. Both retired as Navy Captains. LBJ called off Rolling Thunder about this time, and declined to run for President again. Thank you Lord Jesus.

VMA(AW)-242, MAG-11 DaNang, 1 May 1968, #151178

Capt. E J Fickler / Capt. Gino Christiansen (both survived, sea rescue)

Night IFR takeoff from DaNang, fully loaded with 28 MK-82s. Slats would not retract. Pilot reduced speed, slats retracted, aircraft stalled and spun in, crew ejected safely.

VMA(AW)-533 MAG-12 Chu Lai, 3 May 1968, #154164

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Tom Clem / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Doug Avery (both KIA)

Aircraft lost on Tally Ho mission in Route Package One, contact lost at 0540, cause unknown.

VA-35, 13 May 1968, #152951

LT Bruce Bremner / LT Jack Fardy

Night low-level strike on Vinh airfield. After dropping 18 MK-36 DSTs, hit by AAA in wing, fire ensued, ejected near Enterprise, picked up by plane guard. Both flew another 90 missions.

VA-35, 24 June 1968, #152949

LT Nick Carpenter (KIA) / LT Joe Mobley (POW, released 14 Mar 1973)

Night, single-plane, low level strike near Vinh, hit by AAA over target. Mobley ejected with broken leg, but Carpenter was injured and unable to eject. Mobley retired as a Rear Admiral.

VMA(AW)-533 MAG-12 Chu Lai, 25 July 1968, #154166

Maj. Curt Lawson (survived) / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Paul Brown (POW, released 14 Mar 1973)

Night, armed recce N of DMZ in Rt. Pack 1, hit by AAA, both ejected, pilot landed in river & rescued by Jolly Green under heavy fire the next day. B/N landed on ground & was captured. A hard lesson was relearned, 'Do Not get into a duel with AAA sites'.

VMA(AW)-242 MAG-11 DaNang, 27 July 1968, #152595

Strike damage, loaded with 22 MK-82s in revetment, direct hit while parked on Flight Line. Four other aircraft damaged, and five Marines wounded by the six 122mm rockets fired.

VA-196, A-6B, USS Constellation, 20 August 1968, #151560

LT W. A. Neal / LTJG D. C. Brandenstein (both survived)

After launch, slat malfunction, crew ejected through canopy. The A-6B was modified for the

Iron Hand SAM hunting mission. It carried the AGM-78 Standard ARM (Anti Radiation Missile). 19 aircraft were modified for this mission, and this was the first A-6B loss in combat.

VA-85, A-6B, USS America, 29 Aug 1968, #151561

LTJG Robert Ray Duncan / LTJG Alan Frederick Ashall (both KIA)

Night VFR, 20 mi NW of Vinh at 15,000. SA-2 SAM battery fired 3 missiles. Nearby A-7s observed a fireball at altitude, followed by a fireball on the ground, Last of the 2 A-6Bs lost.

VA-85, 6 Sept 1968, #154127

CO CDR Ken Koskey (POW, released 14 Mar 1973) / LCDR R G McKee (survived, rescued)  
Night VFR, AMTI armed recce near Vinh (AMTI – Airborne Moving Target Indicator). Heavy AAA, crew ejected when hit. This was the fourth Squadron CO to be lost since 1963.

VA-196, 30 Sept 1968, #154149

LTJG Larry Jack Van Renselaar / LTJG Domenick Anthony “Spike” Spinelli (both KIA)

Night VFR, Armed recce AMTI mission N of Vinh on Route 1A. Pilot reported 2 SAM launches at his aircraft, 2 other A-6 crews reported two fireballs at 5,000' followed by a fireball on the ground. Pilot's remains were returned in 1989.

VA-52 Knight Riders, USS Coral Sea (4<sup>th</sup> deployment), 13 Oct 1968, #154141

CDR Quinlen Roberts Orell / LT James D Hunt (both KIA)

Night, armed recce, AMTI mission on roads S of Vinh. Departing target area, crew reported SAM lock-on to a nearby EKA-3B. Jamming was commenced, but the A-6 radar return disappeared shortly thereafter. No trace of aircraft or crew was found.

VA-196, 18 Dec 1968, #154150

LTJG John Richards Babcock / LT Gary John Meyer (both KIA)

Day Steel Tiger mission in S Laos against roads. Four aircraft were under control of USAF FAC. At 10,000' roll-in, aircraft was engulfed in flames and crashed. No ejections were observed, suspect AAA fire or premature MK-82 burst. On their 8<sup>th</sup> run with 2 MK-82s remaining. Repeated attacks on the same target (any target) were not recommended.

VA-196, 19 Dec 1968, #154152

LT Michael Lora Bouchard (KIA) / LT Robert W Culyar (survived)

Night VFR under flares and under FAC control on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in S. Laos. Hit on first run by AAA, starboard wing departed, crew ejected. B/N picked up next day by USAF Rescue. Pilot never found, although search went on for several days.

VMA(AW)-242 MAG-11 DaNang, 17 Jan 1969, #152586

Capt. Edwin James Fickler / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert John Kuhlman (both KIA)

Night armed-recce in the Ashau Valley. Lost radio contact with Army OV-1 Red Eye at 2145. Cause of this loss and the location are unknown.

VMA(AW)-533 MAG-12 Chu Lai, 17 Mar 1969, #154160

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Steven Ray Armistead / Capt. Charles Elbert Finney (both KIA)

Night armed-recce into S Laos. FAC observed A-6 exploding after being hit by AAA at 2130 hours. This was the last 533 loss, as they left for Iwakuni, Japan in Oct. In 30 months the squadron flew 11,058 combat sorties, with the loss of seven aircraft. A 1999 Joint US/Lao team found Capt. Finney's remains, and an ID tag from 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Armistead, but no positive ID on him.

VA-65 USS Kitty Hawk, 3 Apr 1969, #155587

LCDR E. G. Redden / LT J. F. Ricci (both survived)

Day VFR strike on fuel storage area near Mu Gia Pass in S Laos, under control of NAIL FAC. Hit in nose by AAA on roll-in at 13,000'. Crew ejected and rescued by USAF SAR helos.

VMA(AW)-225 Vikings MAG-11 DaNang, 21 Sept 1969, #155611

Major Pete Busch / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. R W Hargrave (both survived)

A third Marine A-6 squadron had arrived. Day VFR CAS mission, flight of two, target was NVA command post in the DMZ. Hit by AAA, crew ejected, pilot was picked up by Army helo, and B/N by a USMC helo.

VMA(AW)-242 MAG-11 DaNang, 29 Sept 1969, #155696

XO Major Luther Lono / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Pat Curran (both KIA)

Night armed-recce in S Laos. USAF FAC lost contact around 2100 25 mi W of Khe Sanh. No sign of aircraft or crew, cause unknown. This was the last 242 loss prior to returning to MCAS El Toro, CA in Sept 1970. In 47 months of continuous service, the 'Bats' flew 16,782 combat missions, losing seven aircraft to enemy action (two of these in DaNang rocket attacks), and two more in accidents. Only VM CJ-1 was in the war longer.

VMA(AW)-225 MAG-11 DaNang, 15 Nov 1969, #155701

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. D. R. Jessen / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. R. D. Tutor (both survived)

Aircraft took fire off the end of the runway at 500' altitude, following night takeoff. Gear up, flaps down, right engine quit, ordnance jettisoned, wing fuel-dump on, in L hand turn trying to RTB. Crew ejected at 200' thru the canopy, aircraft residing in 50' of water in DaNang Bay. Suspect direct enemy action (so say the books) due to previous fire from this area; although Marine grunts guarding the S end of DaNang's two parallel runways were known to fire at aircraft for the serious offense of disturbing their beauty-rest. It was what it was.

VA-196 USS Ranger, 22 Nov 1969, #155613

CDR L. W. Richards (survived) / LTJG Richard Carl Deuter (KIA)

Section launch, day VFR mission under FAC control in S. Laos W of the Ashau Valley. Upon pullout from his dive, the wing failed and aircraft tumbled. Pilot ejected and was rescued by helo. B/N was not seen to eject. AAA or wing fatigue failure is suspected.

VA-196, 22 Nov 1969, #155607

LCDR Richard F Collins / LT Michael Edward Quinn (both KIA)

Second VA-196 loss on the same day. Failed to return from night, armed-recce over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Second aircraft 25 mi in trail observed fireball on the ground. Crew fate unknown.



VA-35 USS Coral Sea, 29 Dec 1969, #152891

LTJG Dustin Cowles Trowbridge / LTJG Walter Henry Kosky (both KIA)

Returning from a routine tanker mission, they were observed 2 mi from ship in a steep nose-down attitude, crew ejected at low altitude, however no chutes deployed.

VA-196, 2 Jan 1970, #152937

LT Bruce Carlton Fryar / LT Nicholas George Brooks (both KIA)

Day VisOrd on storage dump near Mu Gia Pass in S Laos, under FAC control. Hit by AAA on second 40-degree dive, starboard wing separated. Two good chutes observed. Pilot's body in chute was ID'd by Para Rescue crewman, but heavy ground fire drove the helo away preventing retrieval of the body. B/N's remains were returned by Laotian freedom fighters in 1982.

VA-196, 6 Feb 1970, #155618

LCDR E. P. Reese / LTJG E. R. Frazer (both survived)

Steel Tiger mission in S Laos 30 mi W of the DMZ (17<sup>th</sup> Parallel). Rolled-in at 12,500' and hit by AAA passing 7,000'. Port wing departed, crew ejected, both rescued by HH-53 Jolly Green at first light next day.

VA-196, 28 Feb 1970, #155605

LT R. R. Wittenberg / LT H. W. Paul (both survived)

Aircraft may have been on fire just prior to CAT shot. Right engine Fire Warning light 5 seconds into flight, Emergency procedures followed, but pilot lost control at the 90 and trailing smoke the crew ejected. Picked up by the plane guard helo.

VA-145 Swordsmen, A-6C, USS Ranger, 8 Jan 1971, #155647

CDR Keith Royal Wilson Curry (KIA) / LCDR Gerald L. Smith (survived)

Crashed at sea, immediately after launch, 400 yards in front of the ship. The A-6C TRIM (Trails, Roads, Interdiction, Multi-sensor) was designed for the mission by adding LLLTV, FLIR, and eventually an LTD (Laser Target Designator) to mark targets for Paveway LGB (Laser Guided Bombs). 12 aircraft were modified, also going to VA-35 and VA-165.

VA-145, 24 Feb 1971, #156994

LCDR W. Gailbraith / LT D. D. Waters (both survived)

Crashed moments after launching on a strike mission. Crew ejected safely and picked up by plane guard helo. Stores jettisoned to no avail, lost altitude. Suspect starboard engine FOD.

VA-115 Eagles, KA-6D, USS Midway, 12 Aug 1971, #152598

LCDR B. S. Wade / LT J. S. McMahon (both survived).

First KA-6D tanker loss, due to fire in refueling unit. Crew ejected safely and rescued by SAR.

VA-196, KA-6D, USS Enterprise, 9 Oct 1971, #152590

LT C. J. Taylor / LTJG J. Dickey (both survived)

Night tanker mission, pressure altimeter problems before launch. At 400' altitude, nose high with 26 units AOA, airspeed below 100 knots, they stalled and unable to control aircraft, both

ejected safely and were picked up by helo.

VA-165 Boomers, USS Constellation. 30 Dec 1971, #155677

LCDR Frederick Lee Holmes (KIA) / LT C. W. Burton (survived)

Lead aircraft for 6 A-7s, 2 A-6s, and 2 F-4s – when hit by SAM. The mission was to “buddy bomb” off of Lead, due to cloud coverage over the target of Vinh. SAM hit engulfed the aircraft and starboard wing departed. Both crewmembers likely ejected unintentionally. Badly injured, Burton was rescued, but SAR helo could not locate pilot, who might not have survived the ejection.

VMA(AW)-224 (Bengals), USS Coral Sea (6<sup>th</sup> deployment), 9 Apr 1972, #155652

Major Clyde Smith (survived) / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Scott Ketchie (KIA)

Road interdiction mission over The Trail in S Laos at dusk. Hit by AAA at 16,000' following second pass on trucks. Aft section on fire, controls froze, aircraft went into inverted spin. Crew ejected, Smith landing near crash site, Ketchie was not heard from again.

The NVA set us a cordon around the pilot, setting a trap for the SAR attempt that would ensue. Thus began The Rescue of Bengal 505, which rivals that of The Rescue of Bat 21. Major Smith spent four long days on the ground, with air strikes going on all around him in an attempt to neutralize the enemy positions. A HH-53 Jolly Green finally made the attempt on Day 4, enduring heavy ground fire the whole way in and out. The helo pilot was awarded the Air Force Cross for this mission. Smith went on to fly another 32 missions, including the mining of Haiphong Harbor, before 224 came off the line. He later commanded two Marine squadrons.

VA-115 KA-6D, USS Midway (3<sup>rd</sup> deployment), 2 May 1972, #152597

LT R. Bendel / LT J. G. Houser (both survived)

Cockpit fire upon launch, crew ejected after blowing canopy, pilot rescued by helo, B/N rescued by plane-guard destroyer, no injuries.

VMA(AW)-224, 3 May 1972, #155709

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Joseph William McDonald / Capt. David Beryl Williams (both KIA)

Failed to return from day mission NW of Dong Hoi. After hitting target and reporting lead in sight, the A/C disappeared. Cause unknown. Williams remains were returned in Oct 1989.

VMA(AW)-224, 29 May 1972, #155650

LCDR Phil “Beer Barrel” Schuyler / Capt. Lou Ferracane USMC (both survived)

Linebacker strike on Uong Bi RR yards 12 mi N of Haiphong. Hit three different times inbound to target, dropped their Snakeeye MK-82s in a 10-degree dive and exited the area. Made it to designated SAR safe area just as wing spar burned through. Both picked up by Navy SAR helo.

VMA(AW)-224, 11 June 1972, #154145

Capt. Roger Wilson (KIA) / Capt. Bill Angus (POW, released 28 Mar 1973)

Day Linebacker strike on AAA sites near Nam Dinh 40 mi SE of Hanoi. Hit in port wing while pulling out of a 45-degree dive, the wing separated and crew ejected. This was the fourth and last loss on the six-month cruise. The squadron flew 2,800 sorties in 4,500 flight hours, having

taken part in Operation Pocket Money, the mining of Haiphong Harbor on 8 May 1972. This was the only Marine A-6 squadron to deploy aboard a CV during the war.

VMA(AW)-533 MAG-15 Nam Phong Thailand (Rose Garden), 7 July 1972 , #155690  
Capt. Len Robertson (KIA) / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Al Crobath (POW, released 27 Mar 1973)  
Day strike on storage area 5 mi S of Khe Sanh. Pulling off target on first run, hit by AAA in starboard wing. Lt. Crobath ejected. His captors told him that his pilot had died in the crash.

VA-52 USS Kitty Hawk, 19 Aug 1972, #157018  
LT Roderick Barnum Lester / LT Harry Seeber Mossman (both KIA)  
Night IFR strike on transshipment point near Cam Pha. Wreck found on Cu Xu island 30 mi E of Cam Pha on 4 Jun, 1997. Cause unknown. Two sets of remains were repatriated on 15 Jan 2004 and LT Mossman was positively identified. LT Lester was on his 144<sup>th</sup> mission.

VA-75 USS Saratoga, 6 Sept 1972, #155626  
LCDR Donald Frederick Lindland (KIA) / LT Roger Gene Lerseth (POW, released 12 Feb '73)  
Day VFR strike on Kien An airfield near Haiphong. Hit by two SAMS at 13,000' before roll-in. Crew ejected. Lerseth was told by his captors that his pilot Lindland had been killed evading capture. Lerseth was on his 96<sup>th</sup> mission, flew A-6s again, notably on the maiden voyage of USS Nimitz.

VA-35 USS America, 16 Sept 1972, #157028  
CO CDR Verne George Donnelly / LCDR Kenneth Richard Buell (both KIA)  
Night armed-recce along NE rail line to China, heavy AAA reported in that area tracking toward Hanoi. Bright fireball observed at altitude. Donnelly's remains ID'd 5 Feb 1991 from several sets returned by N Vietnam. He was the second squadron Skipper lost in SE Asia.

VMA(AW)-533 MAG-15 Nam Phong (Rose Garden), 11 Oct 1972, #155700  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John Robert Peacock / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. William Marshall Price (both KIA)  
Night armed-recce over lower N Vietnam. Launched at 0057, last contact with an F-4 at 0230. Thought to have gone down 12 mi W of Dong Hoi. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Price was a Canadian in the USMC.

VA-115 USS Midway, 29 Oct 1972, #155705  
LT B. Kallsen (survived) / LTJG M. Bixel (KIA)  
Hard landing on Midway deck, undercarriage collapsed, slid into an F-4 causing Strike damage to it. 4 Sailors killed by flying debris. B/N ejected and was lost at sea. Pilot had minor injuries.

VA-75 USS Saratoga, 21 Dec 1972, #152946  
LCDR Robert Stewart Graustein / LCDR Barton Scott Wade (both KIA)  
Night IFR strike on Kien An airfield near Haiphong. Heavy AAA coming off target, with fireball observed at their altitude, followed by explosion on ground. No word on fate of crew.

VMA(AW)-533 MAG-15 Nam Phong (Rose Garden), 27 Dec 1972, #155666

Capt. Ralph Jim Chipman / 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Ronald Wayne Forrester (both KIA)  
Night armed-recce in Route Pack One with 12 MK-20 Rockeye. Likely cause AAA near coast  
15 mi SE of Dong Hoi. No word on fate of crew.

VA-115, 9 Jan 1973, #155693

LT Michael Timothy McCormick / LTJG Robert Alan Clark (both KIA)  
Night IFR section strike on SAM site 30 mi NW of Vinh, in support of B-52 strike. A dozen  
SAMs were fired at the B-52s and 3 at the A-6s. No sign of aircraft or crew found.

VA-35 USS America, 24 Jan 1973, #157007

LT C. M. Graf / LT S. H. Hatfield (both survived)  
Day CAS mission in I Corps SVN. Hit by SAM or AAA. Ejected & rescued by SAR assets.

#### AND WHEN IT WAS ALL OVER, THEY TALLIED UP THE STATISTICS

VA-35 Black Panthers

4 deployments on; America, Coral Sea & Enterprise, between Nov 66 and Mar 73, 10 A/C lost

VA-52 Knightriders

3 deployments on; Coral Sea & Kitty Hawk between Sept 68 & Nov 72, 2 aircraft lost

VA-65 Tigers

3 deployments on; Connie, Forrestal & Kitty Hawk, between May 66 & Sept 69, 3 aircraft lost

VA-75 Sunday Punchers

3 deployments on; Indy, Kitty Hawk & Saratoga, between May 65 & Feb 73, 9 aircraft lost

VA-85 Black Falcons

3 deployments on; America, Connie & Kitty Hawk, btwn Oct 65 & May 70, (12) 11 A's & 1 B

VA-95 Green Lizards

One deployment on Coral Sea, between Mar and Nov 63. No losses

VA-115 Arabs

2 deployments on Midway between Apr 71 & Mar 73, 4 aircraft lost, 2 A-6A & 2 KA-6D

VA-145 Swordsmen

3 deployments on; Enterprise & Ranger btwn Jan 69 & Jun 73, 2 aircraft lost, 1 A-6A & 1 A-6C

VA-165 Boomers

5 deployments on; America, Connie & Ranger between Nov 67 & Oct 73, 3 aircraft lost.

VA-196 Main Battery

5 deployments on; Connie, Enterprise & Ranger, between Apr 67 & Jun 73, 14 aircraft lost –

13 A-6A & 1 A-6B.

VMA(AW)-224 Bengals

One deployment on Coral Sea, between Nov 71 & Jul 72, 4 aircraft lost

VMA (AW)-225 Vikings

DaNang, between Feb 69 & Apr 71, 2 aircraft lost

VMA(AW)-242 Batmen

DaNang, between Nov 66 & Sept 70, 9 aircraft lost

VMA(AW)-533 Nighthawks

Chu Lai, between Jun 72 & Aug 73, 7 aircraft lost & Nam Phong, Thailand between Jun 72 & Aug 73, 3 aircraft lost – total losses 10 aircraft

US Navy Totals-

Aircraft lost – 59; Fatalities 64, POW 18

Losses by year: 65(5), 66(18), 67(9), 68(16), 69(4), 70(3), 71(4), 72(8)

By Region: SVN(1), NVN(39), S Laos(8), N Laos(11), Other(10)

US Marine Totals-

Aircraft lost – 25; Fatalities 26, POW 5

Losses by year: 67(5), 68(8), 69(5), 72(7)

By Region: SVN(7), NVN(14), S Laos(4)

US Air Force losses of F-111A (our A-6 counterpart)

Aircraft lost – 11; Fatalities 14, POW 2

Losses by year: 68(3), 72(6), 73(2)

By Region: NVN(6), S Laos(2), Cambodia(1), Other(2)

It was an impressive aircraft, but the USAF deployed it prematurely, essentially holding OPEVAL in combat. The Combat Lancer Detachment of 6 aircraft flew from Nellis AFB to Takhli RTAFB Thailand and commenced Combat Ops on 25 March 1968. An aircraft and crew were lost on 28 March, going after a truck park near the DMZ, in the vicinity of the NVN/Laos border, but the wreckage was never found. Another was lost on 30 March due to control problems while still in Thailand, the crew was able to use their escape capsule and was rescued.

A third aircraft was lost on 22 April, halting combat operations. Failure of a hydraulic control-valve rod for the horizontal stab caused uncontrollable pitch up. Inspection of the fleet showed 42 aircraft with the same potential failure. The F-111A was not ready for Prime Time in '68 but came back ready to go in '72.

Of note, the second aircraft was the last one lost on a Rolling Thunder mission, before LBJ ordered the immediate cessation of bombing north of the 20<sup>th</sup> Parallel. On 3 April the bomb line was moved further south to the 19<sup>th</sup> Parallel. His dramatic speech that day also announced that

he was hanging up the spurs and moving back to Texas. As the old C&W song said, “thank God and Greyhound he's gone”. Once again, Thank You Lord Jesus, and can I get an AMEN.

## OPERATION NAMES

Barrel Roll – Air interdiction campaign in N and Central Laos

Linebacker I – Air campaign against NVN Apr-Oct 1972

Linebacker II – Air campaign against NVN Dec 1972

Pocket Money – Aerial mining of NVN harbors beginning May 1972

Rolling Thunder (RT) – Air campaign against NVN between Mar 1965 & October 1968

Route Packages (RP, Pack, Pak) numbered I – V and VIA & VIB from S to N. Numbered geographical areas of NVN designated by CINCPAC to facilitate coordination between Navy &

Air Force missions. Route Package VI was the toughest as it encompassed Hanoi and Haiphong. The 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Saigon fragged the Marine missions into NVN.

Steel Tiger / Commando Hunt – Air interdiction campaign in S Laos on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, also known as the Truong Son Road. The route was 1,000 miles from Hanoi to Saigon, through parts of Laos and Cambodia, encompassing some 12,000 miles of trails in total. It was said that there were 24 ways to die on the Trail. 1 to 2 million north Vietnamese went down the Trail or worked on it. The SoF/SOG personnel affectionately referred to it as the “Averell Harriman Memorial Highway”. It is estimated that 100,000 were casualties, and 30,000 NVA died on it. One for every 300 bombs expended, or about \$150,000 in then-year dollars. One soldier could push a bicycle loaded with 300 pounds of supplies. It took about 6 months to make the trek on foot in 1968, with 80,000 NVA per month making the march down. By 1975 a truck could make the run in a week. Our letters took a week to get home, their letters took 2-3 months.



Yankee & Dixie Stations – Positions in Gulf of Tonkin (Yankee) and South China Sea (Dixie) designated for aircraft carrier operations against NVN, Laos and SVN.

Interesting Factoids, Bomb tonnage expended by American bombers:

Operation Rolling Thunder 65-68 (Including Tally Ho missions in Route Pack I) – 864,000 tons. Comparison; tonnage dropped in the Pacific Theater in WW-II was 503,000 tons.

Commando Hunt / Steel Tiger 65-72 in Laos – 2,500,000 tons. Comparison – tonnage dropped over Europe in WW-II was 2,000,000 tons. More than all tonnage dropped in WW-II combined.

Laos was the most heavily bombed country in history.