

TITLE: The Sound of War: May 10, 1972  
AUTHOR: John D. Gresham  
ADDRESS: 301 Portland Circle  
Huntington Beach, California  
92647  
HOME PHONE: (714) 960-0736  
WORK PHONE: (714) 640-8074  
FAX: (714) 760-1618

The war in Vietnam was one of the first conflicts in which the coverage was vastly expanded by video and audio recording. This additional coverage was not exclusively gathered by the various media corespondents. On the contrary, much of the recorded material from the Southeast Asian conflict was collected, and used, by the forces of the United States and their allies. With the advent of small, transistorized, audio cassette recorders which could fit in the pocket of a flight suit, some of the military recording took the form of personal audio logbooks for some tactical aircrews. This was a natural result of gimmick crazy aircrews buying these "Sierra Hotel" toys during their numerous visits to ports where the Japanese built units were being sold. By splicing the audio inputs of the small tape recorders into the earphones of their headsets, the crews were able to get a audio record of all that they would have heard during their missions. Later, back at their home bases or carriers, the tapes provided a wealth of debrief and timing information. In addition, for those that have kept their tapes over the years, they have provided a new kind of source material for those trying to gain a better prospective of the conflict in Southeast Asia.

Of all the battles that were recorded during the Vietnam conflict, none is more gripping, or chilling, than that experienced by the members of Carrier Air Wing Nine (CVW-9) on their mission to the Hai Duong railroad yard on 10 May, 1972. During this mission, the North Vietnamese Air Force (NVAF) would launch some 30 to 36 MiG interceptors at the CVW-9 strike force. Of these some 18 to 24 MiGs would actually be engaged with more than 30 US Navy (USN) fighters and attack aircraft. During the engagement that followed, two USN F-4J PHANTOM II fighters would be lost to Anti-Aircraft (AAA) fire and Surface-to-Air missiles (SAMs). In addition, three fighter crews from Navy Fighter Squadron 96 (VF-96) would destroy a total of six NVAF MiG-17 FRESKO fighters. Three of the MiGs would fall to a single crew, LT Randall Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll, making them the first "aces" of the Southeast Asian conflict.

A number of aircraft in the strike force had audio recorders on board during the mission to Hai Duong. The

transcription that follows is edited from a composite of two of them. The original recordings were made by pilots of two A-7E CORSAIR II attack aircraft, and were personally transcribed by the author. Should anyone have any corrections, additions, or comments, please forward them through the TAILHOOK Association. They would be greatly appreciated.

For the purposes of reader understanding, a few of the players should be defined:

- o HONEYBEE/BUSYBEE-1 - CMDR Lowell "Gus" Eggert - Commander, Carrier Air Wing Nine (CAG-9) - Flying an A-7E CORSAIR II - Leading the first flight of four A-7Es from Attack Squadron 146 (VA-146).
- o BUSYBEE-5 - CMDR Fred Baldwin - Executive Officer (XO) of VA-146 - Flying an A-7E CORSAIR II - Leading the second section of four A-7Es from VA-146.
- o BUSYBEE-6 - Lt Al Junker - Pilot from VA-146 - Flying an A-7E CORSAIR II - Flying as wingman to BUSYBEE-5.
- o JASON-1 - CMDR Bill Smith - XO of Light Attack Squadron 147 (VA-147) - Flying a A-7E CORSAIR II - Leader of the first flight of four A-7Es from (VA-147).
- o BOOMER-1 - LTCMDR Jack Cartright (Pilot) and an unknown Bombider/Navigator (B/N) from Medium Attack Squadron 165 (VA-165) - Flying an A-6A INTRUDER - Leading the A-6As from VA-165 - Also was leader of the first element of attack aircraft in the strike force.
- o BOOMER-3 - LT Bob Wilkes (Pilot) and an unknown B/N from VA-165 - Flying an A-6A INTRUDER - Leading the second element of A-6As.
- o SILVER KITE-212 - CMDR Harry Blackburn (Pilot), XO of Navy Fighter Squadron 92 (VF-92) and LT Steve Rudluff, a VF-92 Radar Intercept Officer (RIO) - Element Leader of a Target Combat Air Patrol (TARCAP) flight.
- o SILVER KITE-207 - LT Rod Dillworth (Pilot) - and an unknown RIO from VF-92 - Flying a F-4J PHANTOM II - Wingman to SILVER KITE-212.
- o SHOWTIME-112 - CMDR Dwight Timm (Pilot), XO of Navy Fighter Squadron 96 and LT Jim "Foxy" Fox (RIO) from VF-96 - Flying a F-4J PHANTOM II - Element leader of a TARCAP flight.

- o SHOWTIME-102 - LT Dave Erickson (Pilot) and an unknown RIO from VF-96 - Flying an F-4J PHANTOM II -Wingman for SHOWTIME-112.
- o SHOWTIME-106 - LT Matt Connelly (Pilot) and LT Tom Blonski (RIO) from VF-96 - Flying a F-4J PHANTOM II - Element leader of a TARCAP flight.
- o SHOWTIME-108 - LT Arron Campbell (Pilot) and LT Wyane Moore (RIO) from VF-96 - Flying a F-4J PHANTOM II - Wingman to SHOWTIME-106.
- o SHOWTIME-100 - LT Randy "Duke" Cunningham (Pilot) and LT Bill Driscoll (RIO) from VF-96 -Flying a F-4J PHANTOM II - Leading a Flak suppression flight.
- o SHOWTIME-110 - LT Brian Grant (Pilot) and LTJG Jerry "Seacow" Sullivan (RIO) from VF-96 -Flying a F-4J PHANTOM II - Flying as a Flak suppressor - Wingman to SHOWTIME-100.
- o SHOWTIME-111 - LT Steven Shoemaker (Pilot) and LTJG Kieth "Cannonball" Crenshaw (RIO) from VF-96 - Flying a F-4J PHANTOM II - Flying as a single ship escort to an A-7E SHRIKER.

For the purposes of understanding and clarity, the following code words and designations are provided:

SHOWTIME - VF-96 F-4J PHANTOM II

SILVER KITE/KITE - VF-92 F-4J PHANTOM II

BUSYBEE/BEE - VA-146 A-7E CORSAIR II

JASON - VA-147 A-7E CORSAIR II

BOOMER - VA-165 A-6A INTRUDER Bomber or KA-6D Tanker

POUNCER - A-7E CORSAIR II equipped with AGM-45 SHRIKE Anti-Radiation Missiles (ARMS) and ROCKEYE Cluster Bomb Units (CBUs)

SUN KING - Airborne Early Warning Squadron One-Sixteen (VAW-116) E-2B HAWKEYE.

RED CROWN - Radar Control Ship, USS CHICAGO (CG-11)

DEEPSEA - A Electronic Support Measures (ESM) system based on offshore destroyers and aircraft. On 10 May, 1972, the primary control point for DEEPSEA was a USN EP-3A flying off the coast

of North Vietnam. Designed to provide warnings of SAM radar (FAN SONG) activity to U.S. aircraft operating in North Vietnam and Laos.

HARBOR MASTER - Search and Rescue Ship, USS OKINAWA (LPH-3) equipped with United States Marine Corps (USMC) CH-46 SEA KNIGHT helicopters. The helicopters were code named BIG MOTHER.

CHARLIE - OK or Affirmative

FEET WET - Call for an outbound aircraft crossing the coast

SINGER - Callsign for SAM radar (FAN SONG) activity. SINGER "low" strobe indicates a FAN SONG in search mode. SINGER "high" strobe indicates a FAN SONG in launch mode.

SHOTGUN - Launch codeword for a SHRIKE (AGM-45) Anti-Radiation-Missile (ARM)

SPLASH - Call for a downed MiG

GUARD - A preset universal frequency for transmission to all friendly aircraft.

BANDIT - An unidentified MiG aircraft.

BULLSEYE - Hanoi.

BUTTON-11 - Preset radio frequency and alternative name for Electronic Warfare Squadron One-thirty (VAQ-130) EKA-3B "Electric Whale", or VA-165 KA-6D INTRUDER Airborne Tankers.

BUTTON-20 - Preset Radio Frequency, location, and alternative name for RED CROWN, the USS CHICAGO (CG-11).

IRONHAND - AGM-45 SHRIKE ARM

SIDEWINDER - The infrared guided missile used by US aircraft. The AIM-9D version in use during 1972 had a 10 lb. warhead with an expanding continuous rod augmenting the explosive charge.

SPARROW - The radar guided missile used by U.S. aircraft. The AIM-7E2 version in use during

1972 had a 66 lb. warhead with an expanding continuous rod augmenting the explosive charge.

SAM - SA-2 GUIDELINE Surface-to-Air missile. Guided by the FAN SONG radar, this 33 foot long missile was capable of mach three speed and was armed with a large fragmentation warhead.

TIME - Expressed as local time

TIME: 1356 - Our narrative begins with the strike force from CVW-9 already "feet dry". The strike force is assembled at an altitude of 12,000 feet, headed North on a course of approximately 355 degrees and a speed of roughly 350 knots. They have just passed over a Southern arm of the Red River near Ninh Giang. Already there are signs of something unusual happening. Quite simply, the enemy ground defenses are doing almost nothing. Things are quiet. Later, many of those involved would think, too quiet.

BOOMER-1 - BOOMERS, SAM strobe (scan mode) at, ahh...7 O'Clock.

Unknown - SAM high strobe (launch mode) at 7 O'Clock.

HONEYBEE - Let's go BOOMERS (VA-165)...

JASON-1 - JASON-1, SHOTGUN...

POUNCER-1 - POUNCERS Departing (leaving formation to assigned SAM suppression stations)...

JASON-1 - Go ahead...JASON-2, you have it, I'll follow...

BOOMER-1 - Let's go BOOMERS...

HONEYBEE-3 - BEE-3 triple-A (FIRE CAN AAA RADAR?) at 10 O'Clock.

JASON-2 - JASON-2, SHOTGUN, ahh...let's come right...

Unknown - Target at 11:30 now.

POUNCER-1 - POUNCER-1, SHOTGUN...

TIME: 1358 - As Gus Eggert (CAG-9) calls for the strike aircraft to commence their runs, the leader of the VA-165 A-

6As failed to tally the target area in the Hai Duong Railroad Yard.

HONEYBEE - Play ball...play ball...(Command releasing TARCAP and Flak Suppression aircraft to stations)

HONEYBEE - You tally the target BOOMER (BOOMER-1)

BOOMER-1 - Negative the target yet.

HONEYBEE - Roger..aah, you'll have to follow us, we're going to roll in...

BOOMER-3 - BOOMER (BOOMER-1), the target's at your 2 O'Clock, behind you now...

BOOMER-1 - Ahh...roger, understand...by...

BOOMER-3 - Roger you passed right over it.

TIME: 1358:30 - As the attack aircraft of CVW-9 began to stack up, the BOOMERS finally sight the target and begin their runs. The A-7Es of VA-146 and VA-147 follow.

HONEYBEE - Roger, the BOOMERS...it's over at your...ahh... 10 O'Clock, and the...ahh...HONEYBEES (Actually the BUSYBEES, VA-146) are rolling in.

BOOMER-3 - And the BOOMERS are go'in in too HONEYBEE...

BOOMER-4 - BOOMER-4 in...

BOOMER-5 - BOOMER-5 in...

BOOMER-1 - OK BOOMERS...go ahead and roll in.

HONEYBEE - OK, HONEYBEES (Actually, BUSYBEES, VA-146) holding off.

HONEYBEE - Get in there BOOMERS...

SILVER KITE-212 - (the) KITES are behind BOOMERS...

HONEYBEE - OK...Good hits...good place...aah...HONEYBEES (Actually BUSYBEES, VA-146) ready to roll. How you do'in BOOMERS?

SHOWTIME-112 - One-one-two (SHOWTIME-112) SINGER (FAN SONG SAM radar) high (launch mode).

HONEYBEE - OK...the HONEYBEE , and his group (4 A-7Es from VA-146), are in.

BUSYBEE-3 - Three's (BUSYBEE-3) off...

SHOWTIME-106 - Come to starboard Arron (SHOWTIME-108)...

SHOWTIME-108 - Gotcha.

Unknown - And...there go the JASONS in...

TIME: 1359 - As the CVW-9 attack aircraft begin to finish their attack runs, the enemy ground defenses begin to become more active. Seeing this, SHOWTIME-100 and SHOWTIME-110 unload their ROCKEYE cluster bombs on a storage building on the Eastern side of the rail yard.

SHOWTIME-100 - OK Brian (SHOWTIME-110) standby...I'm going to take the orange buildings.

SHOWTIME-110 - Roger...got it, got it...

BOOMER-1 - BOOMER-2...give me a percent (reduce throttle slightly).

HONEYBEE - OK, if you have any bombs left...ahh...hit the Eastern side, Eastern side.

Unknown - Now the BOOMERS are off the target...

DEEPSEA - Standby...we got a missile (SAM) launch.

TIME: 1400 - As the last of the attack begin their egress from the target area, the first enemy aircraft, a flight of MiG-17 FRESOS attack SHOWTIME-100 and SHOWTIME-110 as they pull out of their bombing runs. Almost simultaneously, the first MiG warning calls from RED CROWN begin to be transmitted. As the MiGs overshoot them, SHOWTIME-100 shoots down one of the MiG-17s with an AIM-9D SIDEWINDER missile.

RED CROWN - This is RED CROWN on GUARD...BANDITS, BANDITS, BULLSEYE 036 (degrees relative) for 35 (miles), heading 222 (degrees)...altitude unknown, TIME zero-zero (1400 local)...RED CROWN out...

BOOMER-1 - BOOMER-2...pull me back a percent (reduce throttle slightly).

SHOWTIME-100 - MiG-17!, MiG-17!, MiG-17!, Brian (SHOWTIME-110)...he's on my tail!

SHOWTIME-100 - Brian (SHOWTIME-110), I got a MiG on my tail!

SHOWTIME-100 - OK, I'm drag'in him...get him baby!

RED CROWN - This is RED CROWN on GUARD...BANDITS BULLSEYE  
032 (degrees) for 51 (miles)...heading 227  
(degrees), altitude unknown...RED CROWN out...

TIME: 1401 - Within seconds of the first group of MiG-17s hitting the strike force, several others with mixed formations of MiG-17 FRESCO, MiG-19 FARMER/F-6 FANTAN, and MiG-21 FISHBED fighters, begin to make runs on the attack aircraft. The attack aircraft are particularly hamstrung by their lack of air-to-air armament. Because of the general shortage of AIM-9 SIDEWINDER missiles, the A-7E CORSAIR IIs only carry their internal M-61 20mm Gatling Guns. And many of these are either unservicable, or fail during the fight. The A-6A INTRUDERS are in even worse shape with no air-to-air armament whatsoever. After the shutdown of the first MiG-17, SHOWTIME-100 and SHOWTIME-110 disengage from the first flight of MiG-17s, become separated, and begin to re-enter the fight.

Unknown - (Garbled underlapping transmission) OK, bring him back one (BOOMER-1 or JASON-1), you can hide...

Unknown - Jump onto a tally-ho...

Unknown - (Badly garbled ) respond to the RED CROWN calls...

SHOWTIME-100 - He's on my tail...where is he?

Unknown - BEE-3, you got him, not smoking.

Unknown - Three of them (MiGs), two of them down low...

Unknown - OK, BEE-3 says, that's a BOOMER.

Unknown - (Garbled callsign), break it port (left), port!

Unknown - He's (a MiG-17) on you JASON...

RED CROWN - This is RED CROWN on GUARD. BANDITS BULLSEYE 037  
(degrees relative) for 23 (miles) heading 163  
(degrees). TIME zero-one (1401 local). RED CROWN out.

JASON-3 - JASON-3, I got a MiG (MiG-17) at my tail, this is  
JASON-3, I got a MiG (MiG-17) at my tail!!

Unknown - That's a roger, roger...

Unknown - Mike (LTCMDR Mike Gravely, VA-147, A-7E) there's  
two of them (MiGs), right below me...

Unknown - Come back port (left) there Gravel (LTCMDR Mike  
Gravely, VA-147, A-7E), port!

BUSYBEE-5 - (Garbled) God-Damned thing!!!

Unknown - Ahh...roger...

BUSYBEE-6 - BEE-6 (BUSYBEE-6), I got a MiG (MiG-17) at my  
tail!

Unknown - JASON-1...MiG-17! (Probable break call)

Unknown - (Garbled) Gravel (LTCMDR Mike Gravely, VA-147, A-7E)  
port (left)!

Unknown - JASON-1, back at your four o'clock... (Probable  
MiG-17 call)

RED CROWN - We were off-air...RED CROWN out...

HONEYBEE - OK JASON, Bombers...get out of here.

JASON-1 - We're on the way out...

TIME: 1402 - As the fight continues, two separate engagements  
begin to draw in other members of CVW-9. South of Hai Duong,  
several MiGs begin to make firing passes at LT Al Junker in  
BUSYBEE-6. In particular, one MiG-17 FRESCO makes repeated  
passes at BUSYBEE-6. His element leader, CMDR Fred Baldwin  
in BUSYBEE-5 is unable to fire at the MiG-17 because of a  
failure of his M-61 20mm Gatling gun. In spite of this,  
BUSYBEE-5 makes repeated "dry" firing passes at the MiG while  
calling maneuvering instructions to BUSYBEE-6.

In addition, the crews of SHOWTIME-100 and SHOWTIME-110  
sight several SHOWTIME F-4Js being attacked by several  
flights of MiG-17 FRESCOs. As the MiG-17s begin to gain  
position on SHOWTIME-112 and SHOWTIME-102, SHOWTIME-100 and  
SHOWTIME-110 dive in and begin to call maneuvering calls to  
each other.

BUSYBEE-6 - BEE-6 (BUSYBEE-6) going for the deck! I got a MiG (MiG-17) on my tail firing!

BUSYBEE-5 - Break left...break left! (Break call for BUSYBEE-6)

BUSYBEE-5 - Six (BUSYBEE-6) you have a missile (Probable MiG-21 launched ATOLL/K-13 air-to-air missile)...

BUSYBEE-5 - He's coming back in on you Al (BUSYBEE-6)...

RED CROWN - This is RED CROWN on GUARD. BANDITS BULLSEYE 052 (degrees relative ) for 19 (miles). Altitude unknown. Heading 183 (degrees). TIME zero-two (1402 local). RED CROWN out...

SHOWTIME-110 - Keep it turning Duke (LT Randy Cunningham, SHOWTIME-100)...keep it turning!

BUSYBEE-5 - Get him Al (BUSYBEE-6)...get him!

Unknown - OK SHOWTIME (SHOWTIME-112)...you got one (MiG-17) at your six (o'clock position - directly behind)

SHOWTIME-110 - (Garbled)...OK, Duke (LT Randy Cunningham, SHOWTIME-100) got to him!

BUSYBEE-5 - Break it left Al (BUSYBEE-6), break it!

SHOWTIME 100 - Reverse starboard (right)!

SHOWTIME 100 - Reverse starboard (right)!

Unknown - Move!!

SHOWTIME 100 - Alright SHOWTIME (SHOWTIME-112), reverse starboard (right) GOD DAMMIT!!

SHOWTIME 100 - REVERSE STARBOARD (Right)!!

TIME: 1403 - During the initial stages of the fight, SHOWTIME-106 and SHOWTIME-108 become separated. SHOWTIME-106 begins an aggressive series of maneuvers over the target area. Without a wingman, any radar display video, and only three AIM-9D SIDEWINDER missiles, they sight an A-7E being chased down on the deck by two MiG-17s. One MiG-17 sees them and breaks away, but the other MiG-17 stays on the A-7E and SHOWTIME-106 fires an AIM-9D SIDEWINDER missile at it. The MiG-17 breaks upward and away from the missile, but the A-7E is now clear of the danger. Shortly afterwards, the crew of SHOWTIME-106 sights another MiG-17, maneuvers to the MiG's

six o'clock position (where it suffers from a severe blind spot), and fires another AIM-9D SIDEWINDER missile from a range of about one thousand feet. It blows the entire rear section of the MiG-17 apart.

On the Western side of the target area, SILVER KITE-212 and SILVER KITE-207 fly through a large caliber (57mm or 85mm) flak barrage. SILVER KITE-212 is shot down and the crew ejects to become prisoners of war. SILVER KITE-207 is hit in the right engine and starts to limp back to the coast. At the same time, the other fights continue on with LT Randy Cunningham in SHOWTIME-100 desperately calling to Cmdr. Dwight Timm in SHOWTIME-112 to break away from a MiG-17 at his six o'clock position. While this is happening, LT Brian Grant in SHOWTIME-110 continues to call warning and maneuver calls for the crew of SHOWTIME-100 who have several MiG-17s in firing positions on their tail. Meanwhile, BUSYBEE-5 and BUSYBEE-6 continued their weaving and "dry" passes at the MiG-17 on their way outbound to the coast.

SHOWTIME-106 - OK, SPLASH one (MiG-17)!

SHOWTIME-100 - Reverse port (left) SHOWTIME (SHOWTIME-112)!

Unknown - OK George (LTCMDR George Gorianick, VA-146, A-7E)  
turn and break it right...

BUSYBEE-5 - Break it left Al (BUSYBEE-6)...break it left!

DEEP SEA - SAM...SAM...SAM...vicinity of BULLSEYE. DEEP SEA  
(Garbled) six on GUARD, out...

BUSYBEE-5 - Pull it baby (BUSYBEE-6), pull it!

SHOWTIME-110 - Alright Duke, (SHOWTIME-100) you got him on  
the left now (Garbled)...

BUSYBEE-5 - Still with you Al (BUSYBEE-5) baby...

BUSYBEE-6 - Keep talking, I can't see him (MiG-17)...

BUSYBEE-5 - OK...

BUSYBEE-5 - He's (MiG-17) heading back in at your four  
o'clock, stand by...stand by...stand by...

SILVER KITE-212 - OK Billy (SILVER KITE-207), we're taking  
some flak over here...

BUSYBEE-5 - Not yet...not yet...

BUSYBEE-5 - OK, turn hard right now...he's (MiG-17) starting to pull lead on you again...

SHOWTIME-106 - Arron (SHOWTIME-108), are you OK?

RED CROWN - This is RED CROWN on GUARD. BANDITS BULLSEYE 096 (degrees relative) for 19 (miles)...heading 173 (degrees)...TIME zero-four (1404 local) ...RED CROWN out.

SHOWTIME-100 - I don't know how to shoot at this \*\*\*\*\* AIRPLANE (MiG-17)!!!

SHOWTIME-110 - I don't either, but (Garbled) you got him!

BUSYBEE-6 - Keep calling my tails...

BUSYBEE-5 - OK, he's off...

BUSYBEE-5 - Doing good...keep coming on baby!

BUSYBEE-6 - Tell me (Garbled) left or right...tell me...

TIME: 1404 - The crew of SHOWTIME-106 finds another MiG-17 and shoots it down with their last remaining AIM-9D SIDEWINDER missile. As their second MiG-17 is destroyed, another MiG-17 makes a firing pass at them. Realizing that they very probably had no operable weapons left, the crew of SHOWTIME-106 begins to make their way back to the coast. At the same time, SHOWTIME-112 finally breaks giving SHOWTIME-100 a clear shot at a MiG-17 with an AIM-9D SIDEWINDER missile. The MiG-17 blows up and the crew of SHOWTIME-100 sights another MiG-17 which appears to be headed back towards the MiG field at Phuc Yen. In a furious, vertical battle, SHOWTIME-100 finally gains position on the MiG-17 and kills it with another AIM-9D SIDEWINDER. North of Hai Duong, SHOWTIME-106 had been escorting an A-7E POUNCER doing SAM suppression with SHRIKES, until they had sighted a MiG-17 southbound from the NVAF field at Kep. Going after the MiG-17, they get involved in a three plane chase with SHOWTIME-110 and SHOWTIME-112 trying to shoot a MiG-17 off the tail of SHOWTIME-102. By this time, the battle has been reduced to a furious "furball".

SHOWTIME-106 - SPLASH TWO, SPLASH TWO!!! (SHOWTIME-106 MiG-17 kill #2)

SHOWTIME-100 - Alright, Duke (SHOWTIME-100) got two! (SHOWTIME-100 MiG-17 kill #2)

BUSYBEE-5 - OK Al (BUSYBEE-6), where are you?

Unknown - OK (garbled), get the hell out of here!

BUSYBEE-5 - OK, level out...level out...stay ahead now.

BUSYBEE-3 - BEE-3, say again...say again.

BUSYBEE-5 - Straight ahead Al (BUSYBEE-6), straight ahead.

SHOWTIME-110 - Alright SHOWTIME (SHOWTIME-102), you got another one (MiG) behind you.

JASON-1 - JASON-1, I'm over with the two BEEs (BUSYBEE-5 and BUSYBEE-6) that are in trouble.

BUSYBEE-5 - OK you got him (MiG-17) reversing on you, get out of there.

BUSYBEE-5 - Beautiful Al (BUSYBEE-6), your OK. Your tail's clean. This is BEE-5 (BUSYBEE-5).

BUSYBEE-6 - OK, keep talking...

BUSYBEE-5 - I got ya baby...I got ya...

SHOWTIME-100 - Alright, SPLASH one BANDIT (SHOWTIME-100 MiG-17 kill #3)! Duke (LT Randy Cunningham, SHOWTIME-100) ya got another one!

BUSYBEE-5 - Keep her going Al baby, I got ya...

TIME: 1405 - Realizing that the F-4Js were using up their fuel and missiles at a furious rate, CAG-9 in HONEYBEE orders them to disengage and head for home. As SHOWTIME-100 begins to head outbound, the crew of SHOWTIME-111 sees a MiG-17 begin to make a pass at them. They fire a single AIM-9D SIDEWINDER at the MiG-17, and quickly dodge another MiG-17 that makes a pass at them. As they recover, they see what appears to be the first MiG-17 crashing and blowing up.

Unknown - OK, nice show guys!

Unknown - Let's get out of here, we're running outa ammo (AIM-9D SIDEWINDER missiles)...

HONEYBEE - OK...ahh...let get all the SHOWTIMES and KITES out of there and disengage...and get out of there if you can...

HONEYBEE - And...ahh...lets get the POUNCERS out...

POUNCER-1 - OK, POUNCER-1 is feet wet...

SHOWTIME-111 - SHOWTIME (SHOWTIME-100) low about (course) two-one-zero you got'a MiG (MiG-17) at your six (rear), he's (the MiG-17) coming up after you...look out.

Unknown - Has the tanker (VAQ-130 EKA-3B or VA-165 KA-6D tanker aircraft) come up yet?

JASON-1 - BUSYBEEs (BUSYBEE-5 and BUSYBEE-6), your clean...you don't have anyone (MiGs) on you.

BUSYBEE-5 - Roger, thank you, thank you...

TIME: 1406 - In the background of the recording is the sound of a personal rescue beacon, probably for one of the crewmen from SILVER KITE-212. About this time, the first of the CVW-9 aircraft begin to go "feet wet" down in the "Hour Glass" region of the Red River Valley. As they near the coast, BUSYBEE-5 and BUSYBEE-6 finally lose their MiG-17. At the same time though, the crew of SHOWTIME-106 sights a MiG-17 directly behind SHOWTIME-100. Out of AIM-9D SIDEWINDER missiles, they fire an AIM-7E2 SPARROW missile in boresight mode (with the radar locked at the centerline of the aircraft) at MiG-17 which causes it to break off of SHOWTIME-100.

JASON-1 - JASON-1 feet wet, JASON-2...

JASON-2 - JASON-2 is feet wet...

HONEYBEE - Roger, that's 410 (JASON-1), 413 (JASON-2) feet wet...

BOOMER-511 - BOOMER-511 feet wet...

JASON-404 - JASON-404 feet wet...

HONEYBEE - Roger, 511 and 505 (BOOMER-511 and BOOMER-505), is that CHARLIE?

Unknown - 407 (JASON-407), say your posit (position)...

JASON-407 - 407 (JASON-407) is three miles from feet wet.

Unknown - How far?

BUSYBEE-301 - HONEYBEE-301 (BUSYBEE-301)...305 (BUSYBEE-305),

feet wet...

BUSYBEE-6 - BEE-6 (BUSYBEE-6) is up and I'm feet wet...

SHOWTIME-106 - SHOWTIME (SHOWTIME-100) headed about...180 (degrees). Heads up...you got a MiG (MiG-17) behind you...

SHOWTIME-100 - Where is he (the MiG-17)?

SHOWTIME-106 - OK, he's right on your tail...just don't let him get guns (range?). It's a 17 (MiG-17), you can outrun him.

SHOWTIME-100 - OK, we're alert...

SHOWTIME-106 - OK, if your just crossing over the river, you can pick up at one-eight-zero (course 180 degrees)...

BUSYBEE-5 - BEE-6 (BUSYBEE-6), your OK...you got me down there?

RED CROWN - This is RED CROWN on GUARD...Multiple BANDITS ...BULLSEYE 081 (degrees relative) for 25 (miles)...TIME zero-seven (1407 local)...RED CROWN out...

RED CROWN - This is RED CROWN on GUARD... Multiple BANDITS ...BULLSEYE 081 (degrees relative) for 25 (miles)...TIME zero-seven (1407 local)...RED CROWN out...

POUNCER-1 - POUNCERS are OK, (Garbled) are you feet wet?

BOOMER-3 - BOOMER-506 (BOOMER-3) is feet wet...

TIME: 1408 - While all of this has been taking place, the crew of SILVER KITE-207 has been limping back to the coast on only one engine. They have survived passes by two NVAF MiG-21s which LT Mike Gravely sights on the way outbound. At this time they report their condition and the loss of SILVER KITE-212. While the rest of the force is headed outbound, SHOWTIME-100 suffers a near miss from an optically guided SA-2 GUIDELINE SAM fired from a site south of Haiphong. The hit damages the hydraulic systems of SHOWTIME-100 which limps burning back towards the sea.

SILVER KITE-207 - BUSYBEE-1 (HONEYBEE), this is KITE-207 (SILVER KITE-207), I've taken a hit, and

shut down my starboard engine...and I've...

BUSYBEE - RED CROWN...this is the...ahh..we're engaged with those BANDITS ...ahh...request that you hold your calls for about five minutes...

RED CROWN - RED CROWN roger...

BOOMER-500 - 500 (BOOMER-500) is feet wet...

SHOWTIME-112 - One-one-two (SHOWTIME-112) feet wet...

DEEP SEA - SAM...SAM...SAM...vicinity of Haiphong...DEEP SEA out...(\*NOTE - This SAM call was probably the SAM launch call for the missile that hit SHOWTIME-100, Southwest of Kien An airfield near Haiphong)

Unknown - Triple-one (SHOWTIME-111) are you feet wet?

SHOWTIME-102 - 102 (SHOWTIME-102) is feet wet...

SHOWTIME-112 - And 112 (SHOWTIME-112) feet wet...

SILVER KITE-207 - BUSYBEE-1 (Actually HONEYBEE), SILVER KITE-207, how do you read?

JASON-1 - 207 (SILVER KITE-207), you'r loud and clear...This is JASON-1, POUNCER-1...

SILVER KITE-207 - I've shut down my starboard engine...I've taken a hit...I've got a fire warning light on...

POUNCER-1 - Ahh...roger...POUNCER-1 has started back...en route to the beach...say your posit (position)...

SILVER KITE-207 - Yah...I'm on the 340 (Degrees relative) ...57 (Miles), off of 20 (BUTTON-20)...

HONEYBEE - That's 340 (Degrees relative to USS CHICAGO)?

SILVER KITE-207 - That's three...three-two-zero (320 degrees relative to USS CHICAGO)...56 miles now...ahh...my wingman (SILVER KITE-212) was hit.

POUNCER-1 - Understand your wingman was hit?

SILVER KITE-207 - Rog...he was hit by flak (AAA) and he went in...(pause)...two good chutes, two good chutes...

HONEYBEE - That's 212 (SILVER KITE-212)...

HONEYBEE - SILVER KITE-212 went in...two good chutes

HONEYBEE - OK, mark the posit (SILVER KITE-212's last know position)...

BUSYBEE-5 - You got a plane on your other wing Al (BUSYBEE-6) ...

HONEYBEE - OK...the posit (position) of...ahh...the downed aircraft was directly over the target area (Hai Duong RR Yard)...

BUSYBEE-5 - Al...

JASON-3 - OK...ahh...I just passed over two PHANTOMS (Actually, two MiG-21's returning to base) headed back inbound...

Unknown - Ahh...say...I just got through passing them down my left side...

Unknown - OK, is that you ahh...you with the hit 207 (SILVER KITE-207)...

SILVER KITE-207 - That's affirm (affirmative)...

SHOWTIME-106 - HONEYBEE, SHOWTIME-106...we'll be feet wet in about two minutes...

TIME: 1409 - As SHOWTIME-100 goes "feet wet" north of Luc Linh, the rear of the aircraft explodes and, the crew ejects. A Rescue Combat Air Patrol (RESCAP) is quickly assembled by CAG-9. At the same time, CAG-9 is trying to coach his fuel starved strike force to the airborne tankers just offshore.

Unknown - There's a PHANTOM (SHOWTIME-100) feet wet, burning...

Unknown - Get out, get out, get out!!!

Unknown - Punch out...punch out!!!

Unknown - Who's that for!!

DEEP SEA - SAM, SAM, vicinity of Haiphong...DEEP SEA out...

Unknown - Punch it out...punch it out!!!

Unknown - Co'mon...get out of that airplane (SHOWTIME-100)!!!

Unknown - Get out of that airplane (SHOWTIME-100)!!

Unknown - Who you talking to!

Unknown - F-4 (SHOWTIME-100) is going down...in a spin, off the beach...

HONEYBEE - How far...what's the radial?

Unknown - OK, three...three-two-five (325 degrees relative to USS CHICAGO), no DME (directional measuring beacons)...about five miles off the beach.

Unknown - There's two good chutes (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll).

HONEYBEE - OK, stick with those...stick with those...

Unknown - Roger...

Unknown - OK, are they in the water?

Unknown - Stick with them and give me directions...

POUNCER-1 - OK, POUNCER-1 , headed back in...

BUSYBEE-5 - HONEYBEE, BUSYBEE-302 (BUSYBEE-5)...308 (BUSYBEE-6) (Garbled)...

HONEYBEE - Say again BEE lead (BUSYBEE leader)...

BUSYBEE-5 - Roger, BUSYBEE-302 (BUSYBEE-5), 300 (BUSYBEE-300), and JASON-413...feet wet.

HONEYBEE - Ahh...Roger that...

Unknown - BOOMER, switch BUTTON-11 (Radio frequency switch)...

SHOWTIME-106 - Send tanker, tanker, for SHOWTIME-106 ...feet wet...requesting gas...

BOOMER-515 - Roger, I'm at 310 (degrees relative to USS CHICAGO) 35 (miles), coming down to 20 (20,000 feet altitude)...

TIME: 1410 - As the RESCAP begins to get organized, the personal rescue beacons of LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll begin to come on the air. Meanwhile, the first of

the RESCAP aircraft sight the crew of SHOWTIME-100 in their chutes.

HONEYBEE - How high are those chutes (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll)?

Unknown - OK, their about ten thousand (10,000 feet altitude) now...

HONEYBEE - OK, what's...ahh...what's their (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll) posit (position) again?

Unknown - Five miles (Garbled)...their (LT Randy Cunningham and Lt. J.G. Willie Driscoll, VF-96) drifting North...

HONEYBEE - Three-two-five (325 degrees relative to the USS CHICAGO)...fifty five (55) miles...

POUNCER-2 - OK...this is POUNCER-2...I think I saw the chutes a little bit ago (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll in their chutes)...

HONEYBEE - Give me a posit (position) off of BUTTON-20 again please on the chutes...

Unknown - Roger, their off of twenty (BUTTON-20, USS CHICAGO) it's two-one-zero (210 degrees relative) at eighteen (18 miles)...

SHOWTIME-106 - This is SHOWTIME-106 BUTTON-11 (EKA-3B/KA-6D Tanker)...

JASON-1 - Two-one-zero (SILVER KITE-210) from JASON (JASON-1), do you see the chutes here?

SILVER KITE-210 - That's negative, I just see the splash (impact point for the wreckage of SHOWTIME-100)...

JASON-1 - I saw a red chute (probably the drag/spin chute from SHOWTIME-100) a little bit ago...

JASON-1 - Ahh...here we are...we're going right by them (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll) ...right about three-o'clock here...

SILVER KITE-210 - Ahh...two-one-zero (SILVER KITE-210) out at our three-o'clock here...two good chutes

(LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll)...

Unknown - OK, ahh...two good chutes three-two-five (325 degrees relative to USS CHICAGO) at fifty-five (55 miles)...off twenty (BUTTON-20)...

TIME: 1412 - With the RESCAP forces assembled, CAG-9 calls, via SUN KING (a VAW-116 E-2B HAWKEYE) for the rescue helicopters, code named BIG MOTHER 61, BIG MOTHER-62, and BIG MOTHER-63, to come in and pick up the crew of SHOWTIME-100.

HONEYBEE - OK...POUNCER-2, what's your posit (position) off twenty (BUTTON-20)...

POUNCER-2 - Three-two-five (325 degrees relative to USS CHICAGO), fifty-five (miles), twenty (20,000 feet altitude)...I'm circling two chutes (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll)...

POUNCER-2 - Their (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll) at about eight thousand feet (altitude) right now...

HONEYBEE - OK...hold three hundred (feet) over them (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Willie Driscoll)...

Unknown - (Garbled) the tanker is coming up...

Unknown - We'll be at Channel-20 (BUTTON-20) at Angels-20 (20,000 feet altitude)...

POUNCER-1 - And...ahh...HONEYBEE, recommend we get...ahh ...RED CROWN and...ahh...HARBOR MASTER (USS OKINAWA) to launch...ahh...BIG MOTHER (USMC CH-46 Rescue Helicopters)...

HONEYBEE - Ahh...roger, out...I'm trying to raise them on the GUARD (frequency)...

JASON-1 - And...ahh...this is JASON-1 over the chutes (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll) ...ahh...recommend that we get a tanker (airborne EKA-3B or KA-6D) up here...

Unknown - Roger JASON...ahh...your over the chutes, ahh... give me a vector off of twenty (BUTTON-20)...

JASON-1 - Ahh...roger ...this is three-two-seven (327 degrees relative to USS CHICAGO) for five-five (55

miles)...two chutes (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll) ...approximately three thousand feet (altitude)...four thousand feet...

HONEYBEE - (Garbled) three-two- seven (327 degrees relative to the USS CHICAGO)...five-five (55 miles) off of CHANNEL-20 (BUTTON-20, USS CHICAGO) is that CHARLIE?

JASON-1 - CHARLIE...

BUSYBEE-301 - HONEYBEE, BUSYBEE-301...

HONEYBEE - Ahh...roger BUSYBEE-301...

BUSYBEE-301 - Coming over CHANNEL-20 (BUTTON-20) about to hit the tanker (EKA-3B or KA-6D)...I'll...ahh... pickup fifteen-hundred (pounds of fuel) apiece and...ahh...standing by for RESCAP...

HONEYBEE - Ahh...roger, roger...ahh...outstanding...and, ahh ...and remain at this frequency for a moment...

BUSYBEE-301 - Wilco...

SUN KING - This is SUN KING, who took the hit?

JASON-1 - SUN KING, this is JASON...ahh...one (JASON-1) ...ahh...looks like there's probably two down...one (SILVER KITE-212) in the target area (Hai Duong RR Yard), and one (SHOWTIME-100) five miles offshore...

JASON-1 - I think it's two-one-two (SILVER KITE-212), but I can't be sure...

HONEYBEE - Ahh...two-one-two (SILVER KITE-212) was brought down in the target area (Hai Duong RR Yard) ...ahh...any KITES (SILVER KITES) at this frequency, over...

SILVER KITE-210 - KITE-210 (SILVER KITE-210) is at this freq (frequency)...

SILVER KITE-206 - Two-zero-six (SILVER KITE-206) and two-zero-one (SILVER KITE-201) are checking in...is that CHARLIE?

Unknown - That's affirm (affirmative) we're at (Garbled)...

TIME: 1414 - As the crew of SHOWTIME-100 descends toward the

sea in their chutes, SA-2 GUIDELINE SAM batteries located along the coast begin to fire on, and harass, the RESCAP aircraft. In an effort to minimize the risks to all of the aircraft that want to participate in the rescue operation, CAG-9 sets up a small RESCAP group and orders them to watch over the downed aircrew while ordering the rest to return to the USS CONSTELLATION.

JASON-1 - OK...we're taking SAM (SA-2 GUIDELINE SAMs) fire over the chutes (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll), their (the SAMs) going off very high...ahh ...(Garbled) the shots...

JASON-1 - Recommend we get everyone out of here we don't need...ahh...like to keep two A-7's and one F-4...

HONEYBEE - Ahh...roger ...ahhh...JASON-1, ahh...your over the chutes (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll) now, is that CHARLIE (correct)?

JASON-1 - That's affirm (affirmative)...

POUNCER-1 - And, POUNCER-1's over the chutes (LT Randy Cunningham and LTJG Bill Driscoll)...

Unknown - Roger that...

BUSYBEE-310 - ...BUSYBEE-310...we have a couple more missiles (SA-2 GUIDELINE SAMs) now...

BUSYBEE-310 - Their (the SAMs) going off very high...

Unknown - ...I lost it on that...

JASON-1 - ...And JASON-1 and POUNCER-1 and POUNCER-2 are with you...

HONEYBEE - Ahh...roger ...ahh...let's put up a patrol on the coastline and, ahh...hit anything that comes out from the beach.

JASON-1 - Roger that...

Unknown - Have to look out for, ahh...strike aircraft from the other two strikes too (from CVW-15 and CVW-11)...

Unknown - They are already inbound...

Unknown - And...POUNCER-2 (VA-147, A-7E SHRIKER), you still got one...ahh...IRONHAND (AGM-45 SHRIKE)

POUNCER-2 - That's affirm (affirmative)...

The crew of SHOWTIME-100 would spend only a short time in the water before they would be picked up by a pair of USMC CH-46 helicopters and taken to the USS OKINAWA. Later that day, they would be returned to a joyous reception on the USS CONSTELLATION (CV-64).

Many times, we study an event, but forget that the event was a result of the actions of the people involved. The preceding transcript is an example of how audio recordings can add to the understanding of an event. It shows us not only what happened, but how and when. And if it shows anything, it shows how desperate men, in an impossible and potentially fatal situation, can, through persistence and courage, overcome great odds, and win.

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