



DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY
FULFILLING OUR NATION'S PROMISE

DPAA Joint Task Force Full Accounting
Case 1538 - USMC Capt. Carl Edwin Long
VAL-4 OV-10 Loss 20 December 1969
Joint Field Recovery Operations Activity 74
June-July 2003
LTC Thomas T. "Ty" Smith, Commander
Detachment 2, Hanoi, Vietnam
Capt. Geoff Kent, Team Leader
Recovery Team 5, JTFA Headquarters, Hawaii
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Photographs: LTC Ty Smith & Buddy Newell



Black Pony Det. B Vung Tau Flightline



JOINT TASK FORCE

FULL ACCOUNTING

CAMP H. M. SMITH, HAWAII 96861-5025

NARRATIVE: CASE 1538-0-01

On 20 December 1969, Captain Carl E. Long (USMC) and Lieutenant Junior Grade Joel A. Sandberg (USN) were the crew aboard an OV10 aircraft (Serial Number 155503) which crashed in the vicinity of grid coordinates YS252610, approximately 12 kilometers west of Phuoc Le, Dong Nai Province. In January 1970, a search team recovered partial remains which were identified as LTJG Sandberg. In March, 1970, another search team returned to the crash site but was unable to locate the wreckage.

On 8 September 1992, a joint team visited Hoi Bai Village (YS284626), Chau Thanh District, Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province, to interview local residents regarding the recovery of alleged U.S. remains at a nearby crash site. Two witnesses reported they recovered remains and an identification card from a crash site which were turned over to province officials in February 1987. One witness produced a receipt indicating Mr. Hung of the Interrogation Section of the Dong Nai Province Public Security Office had acknowledged receipt of the remains and a wallet. The two witnesses provided the team additional bone fragments and other material evidence correlating Captain Long reportedly recovered from the same site. A third witness provided a firsthand account of a UH-10 aircraft that crashed into a nearby marshy area sometime during 1969.

On 14 December 1992, the Vietnamese Government repatriated the remains believed to be associated with this case. The remains are currently under analysis by the Central Identification Laboratory.

Until They Are Home

-Bringing Back The MIAs From Vietnam, A Personal Memoir by Thomas T. Smith

The case in question was the crash site of U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Carl Edwin Long, from Dallas and the Texas A&M class of 1966.

On December 20, 1969, Captain Long and USN Lt. (jg) Joel A. Sandberg were flying a propeller-driven OV-10 Bronco out of Vung Tau as part of the U.S. Navy Light Attack Squadron Four (VAL-4), "Black Ponies" Rung Sat special patrol, to spot Viet Cong positions in the delta. Long was checking out a suspicious sampan in the Long Tau shipping channel when his wing-man reported he had lost radio contact with Long. Long's aircraft was spotted in the swamp, and an attempt was made to hook it to a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. Unfortunately, the lifting strap broke, and the aircraft sank into the morass before Long's body could be pulled from the cockpit.

Thirty-four years later the investigative team questioned a shrimp farmer who was raising shrimp in a canal near the reported crash site. The farmer said he had been living there for only twenty years and knew nothing of the crash. However, he mentioned a place out in the mangrove, where the undergrowth was not very thick, and oil bubbled up to the surface. Buddy, Steve Hawley, my predecessor, and Dr. Pete Miller, a wet-site specialist, took a boat and then canoes to the site and decided the dig was just about feasible.

Miller and his team, led by Capt. Geoff Kent, and about two hundred Vietnamese workers spent seventy-one days clearing vegetation, building two square coffer dams, one inside the other, draining the site into the delta and well away from the shrimp farm to avoid environmental issues with the farmer. They constructed a bamboo bridge several hundred feet long from the site to the only dry ground available, the ten-foot-wide banks of the canal, where they set up the work and screening stations. It was a task of monumental proportions in an incredibly unforgiving environment. I was simply astonished the first time I saw it.

The MI-8 gingerly set its wheels on three small, wooden platforms rising out of the muck. As we hopped out, we were met by a smiling Captain Kent, who greeted us with "Sir, we got the gold." Crossing the rickety bamboo bridge to the coffer dams, I could see in the wide, deep pit pieces of wing, engines with bent propeller blades, rocket pods, and scattered aircraft parts. The team had dug about twelve feet below the original surface with a series of stairstep levels shored up by the strong marine plywood we had imported from Hawaii. Cave-in was a constant danger.

Knowing that I had gone to graduate school at Texas A&M and that many of my family members were Aggies, Geoff held out his closed fist and said, "Here you go, sir. Gig 'em!" He then dropped Carl Long's Class of '66 ring in my palm. I held the ring for a long time, wanting to get on my cell phone and call Long's parents, as well as Col. Sam Hawes, my oldest army and Aggie buddy, but I could not tell anyone. The news had to be kept a complete secret until the official ID was made at the CIL-HI lab and the Marine Corps had notified the family. I held the ring a long while and then walked off down the canal path so the others would not see my tears.

On September 16, 2004, USMC Capt. Carl Edwin Long was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



Small square left side is helo LZ, large square center is cleared site.
Blue tarps are screening station and pump station.







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Extract from Col. Smith's email of July 17, 2018

When we did the recovery of Capt. Long (JTFA Case 1538) near Vung Tau the only information we had about Lt.jg Sandberg was that he was recovered from the aircraft but Capt. Long was not, therefore only Capt. Long was listed as MIA. Your letter indicates you only recovered Lt.jg Sandberg's head, but not the remainder of his body. I have no idea if portions of the remainder of Lt.jg Sandberg were also recovered along with Capt. Long. That would have been sorted out back at the Central Identification Lab (CIL) in Hawaii. If this was the case I never received information concerning the final bone analysis.

Regards, Ty Smith - Col. (Ret.)