

CH-3E Hit By 37 mm Anti-Aircraft Fire Over Tchepone, Laos 4 April 1970

A mission recollection from Jerry Kibby

I can't recall the name of the AC on the CH-3 that got hit by a 37mm that day over Tchepone. He was a LtCol. who had been in the 21st previously and then worked in the frag shop at Udorn - and continued to fly with the 21st periodically. One of the FE's on his helicopter was Tom Mason.

We were coming back toward the trail headed southwest after lead inserted a team. Lead was lost and would not listen when I told him we had passed our trail crossing point some distance back. Just as I was telling him again, all the guns in the world (23mm and 37mm) cut loose. I was number three in the formation with LtCol. Byrd as my copilot. Byrd was on his first in-country mission. Vic Genetz was AC on number two in the formation.

When the guns cut loose, lead and I both started to jink like crazy. I had the Heavy Hook medic on board in addition to my regular crew. Everyone on my crew plus the medic started to call off the status of the AAA streams that were working toward our aircraft. Periodically, I would do some odd maneuvers like banking hard one way but not pulling/not turning in order to get away from the AAA streams. Vic's helicopter was not jinking and the last I saw of him, his disappeared in the distance ahead of us. Lead AC saw Vic's helo way off ahead and could not see mine.

Lead was hit by a 37mm round and lost engine #2, due (I believe) to the 37mm round's concussion up #2 engines tail pipe - so they were losing altitude over the guns. Lead AC started to call for help over the radio. Right then I had our helo just behind and to the right of his and we were looking at the hole in his bird to see if we could determine damage extent. As we were looking it over and lead was calling on the radio, I let him know where we were and that his helo looked OK. They got the #2 engine restarted and regained altitude and speed.



While we were looking at the hole from our bird, Tom Mason was looking back at us from lead - through the hole and with a big grin on his face - lots of teeth. What a sense of humor!

Photo's provided & altered by Jim Burns