

COMBAT SKYSPOT, Revisited

By Gordon Barnes, Julian Higgins, and Garrett Moore

In the January 2016 edition of this Newsletter, we presented an article describing the Photomapping support to Operation COMBAT SKYSPOT in SEA. At the end of that article we appealed to anyone who was involved or knew of someone who was to contact one of the authors so that they could be recognized.

We have had limited success so far in identifying such people. Some of the people involved were identified by name in the original article so will not be noted again here. Among the new names identified is:

Jim Wheeler

Jim was a pilot and Aircraft Commander of a crew which flew the HIRAN Trilateration missions over Laos to position Lima Site-85. These missions were flown out of Tuy Hoa AB in Viet Nam as a mission of AST-3.

Other Photomappers involved with SKYSPOT in SEA were several members of our Geodetic Survey Squadron (GSS) or 1373rd M&C Squadron who at the time were assigned to SAC's 1st Combat Evaluation Group (1CEVG). They are:

John Guerin
Antone Marks
Dick Massetti
Connie Musha
Kip Nissen

These men were ground surveyors who positioned SKYSPOT sites in Laos, Vietnam, and/or Thailand. Guerin and Marks were among six 1CEVG surveyors who were ambushed and killed while enroute to a site near Dong Ha, Vietnam. Massetti, Musha and Nissen were directly involved in an earlier effort to position Lima Site-85 in Laos, before ACGS involvement. Their recon by helicopter resulted in a crash in which no one was injured.

In chasing-down names of other Photomappers who were involved with efforts in neutral Laos, we found some who supported another previously classified mission with the unclassified nickname Operation COMMANDO HUNT. Their missions were also flown by AST-3. They positioned 11 points of interest in Laos using the SCP technique and flew 1686 linear miles of simultaneous HCP/TPR/LORAN photo. Significantly, their missions required flying straight and regular flight lines at a constant altitude well within range of enemy anti-aircraft artillery and SAMS. Members of the aircrews which participated are:

Dennis Davis
Phil Poukish
Bruce Sophie

Davis and Poukish were Navigators and Sophie was a Pilot and Aircraft Commander.

Obviously there were many more Photomappers involved in these missions who deserve to be identified and acknowledged. We would like to continue doing this. So, if you know of any, please contact one of the following: Gordon Barnes at glbjlb@charter.net or phone 636-227-4327, Julian Higgins at [jhjh37@cox.net](mailto:jhh37@cox.net) or 850-651-7004, or Garrett Moore at garrettmoore@verizon.net or 703-266-3293. We particularly would like to identify the three Ground Station Guys who ran the Lima Site-85 Station during its positioning. Thus far we have no leads to their identities.

We would also like to encourage any of those mentioned above who are still with us to write a little something about their involvements, particularly anything that made these missions unique. We would love to publish these stories in this Newsletter and/or on our website. If interested please contact one of the people mentioned in the previous paragraph and they will provide help and support.