

CAVEAT for this story: This is one of the many tales we heard while we were in Southeast Asia. There's no way to verify it short of someone who was actually present, coming forward and authenticating it. Since the story DOES have a modicum of truth to it, I've decided to share it with the Association. Besides, who doesn't love a good Spectre story?

Jeff Noecker, Crew 7, 16TH SOS 1970-71

Nothing noteworthy here with regard to the players. Rather, the mission itself needs a bit of clarification for those of you who may not be aware of the ROE of the time. We simply didn't fly during daylight hours. The exceptions would be those rare instances in which intel and/or on-scene folks guaranteed the absence of any triple A emplacements. This is a semi-humorous retelling of one such mission.

On this particular mission, the AC-130 was assigned to interdict some commie water traffic near a reservoir. If I remember correctly, the reservoir was man made and had flooded a valley that had a hill in the middle. On that hill was a Wat (Buddhist temple or pagoda). When the flooding of the valley was complete, the hilltop became an island within the reservoir, with the pagoda as the only remaining structure left intact and above water. Moored all around this island were several hundred sampans, rafts, barges, and small boats, all belonging to the Khmer Rouge and all loaded with ammo, explosives, and other nasty things of war. As per doctrine, religious buildings were always off limits and any legitimate target had to be over 25 meters away from any structure. Since the "flotilla" was moored virtually at the temple doorstep, the gunship couldn't fire. The crew relayed that fact to ABCCC and were told to loiter as long as fuel was available. The crew called them again after, about another hour, and was given essentially the same instructions with the caveat that something would be done to disperse the water craft. Some time later, the Rt scanner reported numerous, small, silver-gray airplanes off in the distance but couldn't tell their heading. If someone had told me that small, "silver" airplanes were nearby, ESPECIALLY during daylight hours, my flight suit would have been full of every sort of waste material my body was capable of producing! Anyway, the pilot tells the scanner to keep an eye on them and report if they got closer. Within 5 mins, the scanner reported precisely that. Another call to Hillsboro and the crew was told not to worry about it. What a timely call....ALL 15 flight suits must have been fairly soiled by this time. In a few mins, the crew could make out the bogeys. They were Cambodian T-28's and they started peeling off and diving toward the water like John Wayne in a WWII movie. They went in with small bombs, rockets, and strafing, What the hell; it was THEIR country, THEIR temple, and certainly NOT restricted by US doctrine. After the initial attack by the T-28's, the boats, etc., began fleeing in all directions and the gunship opened up and ultimately went Winchester. The one major bit of intel gleaned by the crew was that most of these rafts were made out of bamboo, and you had to put a bullet through each segment to get it to sink. (Sounds about right)