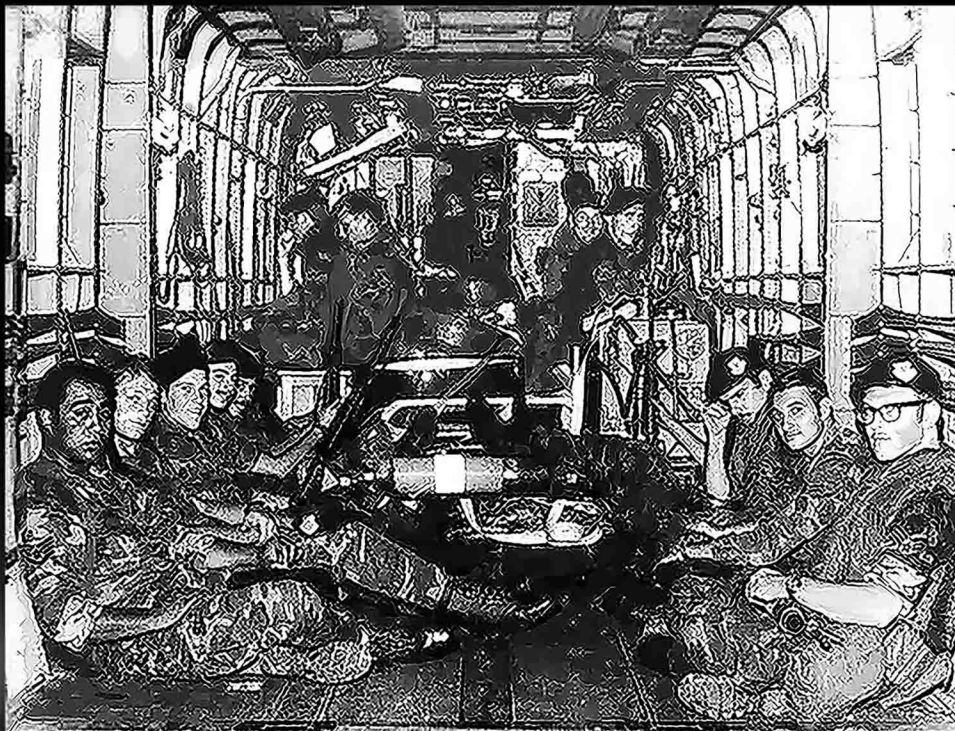


KNIFE-13 MEMORIAL

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
56TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON, AND 21ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON, NAKHON PHANOM RTAFB, THAILAND



KNIFE-13 GOODBYES

STANDING ON THE METAL TARMAC AT U-TAPAO, PEERING AT STARS ON THAT WARM MAY NIGHT, THREE BLINKING LIGHTS APPEARED ON THE HORIZON ... HEARTBROKEN, THE FOURTH NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

LANDING IN BREATHLESS SLOW-MOTION, NOT KNOWING WHICH ONE WENT DOWN, WE WERE TOLD THAT OUR BROTHERS WERE LOST ... FOUR JOLLY GREENS, NOW ONLY THREE.

STANDING THERE, MY HEART SINKING WITH THE POUNDING ARRIVAL OF EACH WHIRRING ROTOR, READING THE NUMBERS ON THEIR SIDES AS THEY POWERED DOWN EACH PULSING JET MOTOR, I BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT MY DELTA SQUAD BROTHERS WOULD NOT DISEMBARK. MY BROTHERS NO LONGER THERE, I BEGAN A SOUL QUENCHING REALITY, A MISSING SPARK, MY YOUTHFUL SPIRIT QUICKLY LOST.

HEROES WHO VOLUNTEERED AND BROKE BREAD WITH ME, NOW THE GHOSTS OF KNIFE-13. THROUGH GOD'S INTERVENTION I HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM THEM JUST HOURS BEFORE, HANDSHAKING AND HUGGING GOODBYES, NOT REALIZING THERE WOULD NEVER BE MORE. I SHIFTED BETWEEN ANGER, DESPAIR, AND THE REALIZATION I WOULD NEVER AGAIN SEE MY BROTHERS ALIVE ... A TWENTY-YEAR OLD SERGEANT, INSTANTLY GROWING IN MATURITY TO A TEMPERED OLD THIRTY-FIVE.

THEY ARE ALWAYS IN MY THOUGHTS, NOW AND IN THE DECADES SINCE THAT WARM AND FATEFULLY CLEAR NIGHT, WHERE THREE BLINKING LIGHTS APPEARED ... HEARTBROKEN, THE FOURTH NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

SGT J.C. HAGLER, 56TH SPS, NKP 1974-1975, SOLE SURVIVOR OF DELTA SQUAD, KNIFE-13 MAY 13, 1975