

## Combat Lancer F-111 Crash

On March 30, 1968, Major Royal and his crew (Batcat crew 4) were returning to Korat AFB early the morning of March 30, when Major Royal was asked to go investigate an aircraft crash. Little did we know what we were about to locate. As we arrived close to the crash site area, we established radio contact and at that moment we hear the downed flight crew identify their aircraft as a F-111.

The following is an extract from COMBAT LANCER history: "Major Sandy Marquardt (2nd combat mission) and Capt Joe Hodges (3rd combat mission) ejected and landed safely. The crew thought they were under enemy fire when the M61 ammo in the wreck 'cooked off.' Believing they were in Laos, the crew began escape and evasion tactics. They were later found in Thailand, only a short distance from the module."

I recently talked with Joe Hodges and he told me that six aircraft, in the first wave, arrived at Takhli RTAFB and immediately starting flying combat mission. Two combat missions later two aircraft had crashed and four crew members were killed. One of the aircraft crashed the night before their mission and no one had any idea where the crash site was, nor had heard anything from the crew. Capt Hodges said the fact that we were number three in the loss column was enough to make us wish we were still flying F-4s. We were rookies at best and scared, to you know what, when it happened. When we located the downed aircraft and flight crew was rescued, Sandy and Joe were the first surviving F-111 aircrew members in Southeast Asia.

At that moment in time, we were not aware of the significance of locating the F-111 aircrew. I'm very proud of what happened that night and I know Sandy and Joe felt the same way. A good landing is one you can walk away from.

Thanks,

Dick Anderson  
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