

## JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE CARIBBEAN AVIATION OPERATIONS BRANCH

The following is a synopsis of a normal 24 hour period of operation at the Caribbean Aviation Operations Branch (CAOB). The synopsis contains excerpts from the CAOB daily log and personal observations from myself, who was on duty 12 of the 24 hours.

11/27/93

0700 Enter Mark Sessi, aka "Cess", TDY from JAX. He receives a request from the local Border Patrol Office for UH-60 support. There are over 30 tired and hungry men, women and children of Cuban nationality that need to be transported from Mona Island to Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Enter Ken "Launch the Fleet" Altman, a CAOB Supervisor whose number of nicknames exceeds his 25 years of service. Ken mulls over the decision whether or not to launch the Hawk for about 2 seconds. His decision is to launch the Hawk ASAP, suuuprise!, suuuprise!

0700-1200 Enter the UH-60 crew, Richard "Dogman" Schaefer, PIC; Pat "natural doo" Coyle, SIC; and Max "Madman" Jessurun, AIO. The Black Hawk conducts 4 round trip flights between Mona and Aguadilla in order to successfully complete the mission. The Hawk logs over 4 hours, while back at the ranch, Ken puffs down a pack of Marlboros awaiting it's safe return.

1200 Ken calls the Drug Interdiction Operation Center (DIOC) to verify P3 and E2 support for a possible air drop tonight. The dome support will be available and intell has the drop site east of PR somewhere in the Aneгада Passage sometime between 1600 and 1800. Ken inhales 3 or 4 ciggs then calls in the night crews early so they can be in the drop area prior to 1600.

1230 Ken receives a request from the SAC, San Juan to locate the vessel "Looking Good" in the ST Thomas area. - The C404 is dispatched, but it returns with negative results.

1315 DIOC advises CAOB that an E2 will be on station SE of PR from 1700 to 2100hrs.

1330 Ken pushes down a pack while coordinating French and British marine assets to support the air units in the drop site. If needed, the French and British assets will be available.

1400 Enter the night shift CHET (Omaha 85) and Nomad (Omaha 02) crew respectfully; Mark "Green Gas" Jackson, PIC; Joaquin "Screaming Eagle" Colondres, SIC; Steve "Frosty" Geron, AIO; Dave "Done that" Cruciger, PIC; Jim "Dances with Men" Clem, SIC; and Les "The Grump" Robb. After a shift brief from Ken, The crews depart for the drop site.

1400 Ken calls Domino's. It's going to be another long night.

1600 The DIOC advises the CAOB that the pick-up vessels have departed from the East side of PR and are enroute to the drop site. Everything was going just as planned - or was it?

1630 Omaha 85 and Omaha 02 are in the vicinity of drop the site waiting for the drop plane.

1700 Border patrol inquires as to the possibility of more UH-60 support. Another yola is landing on Mona Island. UH-60 is down due to a 30 hour inspection. Request is sadly denied.

1730 DIOC calls with information of a primary target 115 miles South of Dominican Republic, heading 010 at 300kts! Could the Smugglers be back dooring us? Could they be dropping to the West side of PR instead of the forecasted East side? Ken eats a pack while we dig up another CHET crew. Omaha 02 is directed to start making the hour and a half flight back to the West.

1740 Enter back-up CHET crew, Richard "Dogman" and Pat "Natural Dew" and a new player called in from home on his day off, Chris "Mongo" Oslin, AIO. Omaha 91 is launched to intercept the inbound primary target. DIOC calls with update: primary target is now 90 miles South of Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. A mere 200 miles from the originally briefed location!

1802 DIOC calls and informs us that the primary target is orbiting 10 miles of the SE side of Dominican Republic. Omaha 91 gets there just in time to see a Turbo Commander orbiting 2 lights out vessels before the suspect plane departs the area.

1803 Overflight authorization is requested for Dominican Republic.

1830 Ken receives a call to inform us that the overflight authorization has been denied! Ken sits down to suck some compressed air from my HEEDS bottle. He then gets up and pours a biggie coffee. He calls wife for an emergency resupply of smoke sticks.

1835 Overflight authorization is granted!!

1840 Omaha 91 follows suspect plane southbound until E2 takes over. Omaha 91 returns to the vicinity of the lights out vessels, but it is unable to reacquire them due to gadget problems. Omaha 91 RTB's.

1900 Enter back-up Nomad crew, Gary "Rainman" Sparrow, PIC; John "Local Hire" Stanton, SIC; and being sodomized once again, Chris "Mongo", AIO. Ken launches Omaha 05 in a last ditch effort to locate the two lights out vessels off the coast of

Dominican Republic.

1930 New York TDY CHET crew detects lights out aircraft 20 miles south of Ponce. Suspect A/c winds up being Nomad.

1940 New York TDY CHET crew finds another A/C flying lights out. It is identified as a Piper Cheyenne, with a radar nose and FLIR ball. New York crew marvels at ingenuity of smugglers in the Caribbean! Ken starts smoking a live lizard wrapped in memo paper.

1945 Omaha 85 has lights out plane, low altitude, 35 miles South of ST Croix. Ken immediately turns around Omaha 02 (Nomad) in order to provide support to the East.

2000 No updates. Radios are quiet. Ken is resupplied with smokes. Ken is happy.

2015 DIOC has the suspect plane, now identified as a Cessna Caravan turning Southbound. Air drop is unconfirmed.

2100 Omaha 05 detects what looks to be a 60 to 80 man Yola.

2105 Border Patrol and local marine units are notified. Border Patrol vessel is not available, and Maritima can receive transmissions, but not transmit. Ken gives CB radio to Maritima Officer to communicate with the Nomad.

2110 Local narcotics police call to inform us of illegal narcotics in front of the Coast Guard Base. Language barriers presented comprehension problems. Referred to the Coast Guard Security Officer.

2130 Yola detected by Omaha 05 was confirmed to be a lights out fishing vessel.

2400 Ken finally finishes carton number 7, and figures that the circus is over, as all the planes are back in the barn in various states of repair or disrepair. Ken finally gets in his G-Rid and heads home for a quiet night's slumber.

0300 Kens' telephone rings. He is advised by Sector that shortly after midnight, USCG Shark 16 observed a "Go Fast" vessel travelling lights out at a high rate of speed south of St. Croix.

0303 Ken, in a fatigued state, stumbles over his Rottweiler, who responds by attempting to remove several of Kens' appendages. Dog smacked with carton of smokes and whimpers away. Ken now returns to the CAOB.

0330 Three bales of dope were removed from the water near St. Croix, and numerous more packages are suspected to be floating in the area. The bales were described as being wrapped in white

burlap. USCG believes that at least three individuals were in the Go Fast previously spotted. Two individuals were arrested, while third crook is believed to have taken an early morning swim. TDY crew launched in CHET to the suspect area.

0335                    There is pandemonium, as Kens' zippo runs out of fluid.

0400                    Negative results from the CHET performing Marine Search with Air Tracking platform. Wonders never cease to amaze us.

0700                    Cessna 404 launched to look for contraband near St. Croix with Acting Branch Chief in aircraft, as no other crews are available. Lots of garbage found in the water, but no bales observed.

So goes another fun-filled day at the CAO. Just think, it will all start again tomorrow, so stay tuned....