

Knife 03 / 04 Mission

2 Nov 01

Captain Mike “Big Daddy” Holder

Mission Tasking for Knife 03/04

- Exfil critically ill SF member from mountains of northern Afghanistan
- Route was planned week prior by same crews
  - Deemed too high risk due to enemy threat and altitudes
  - Would execute ONLY for Life or Death situations
- Departed at nightfall as a 2-ship, 2 Nov 01

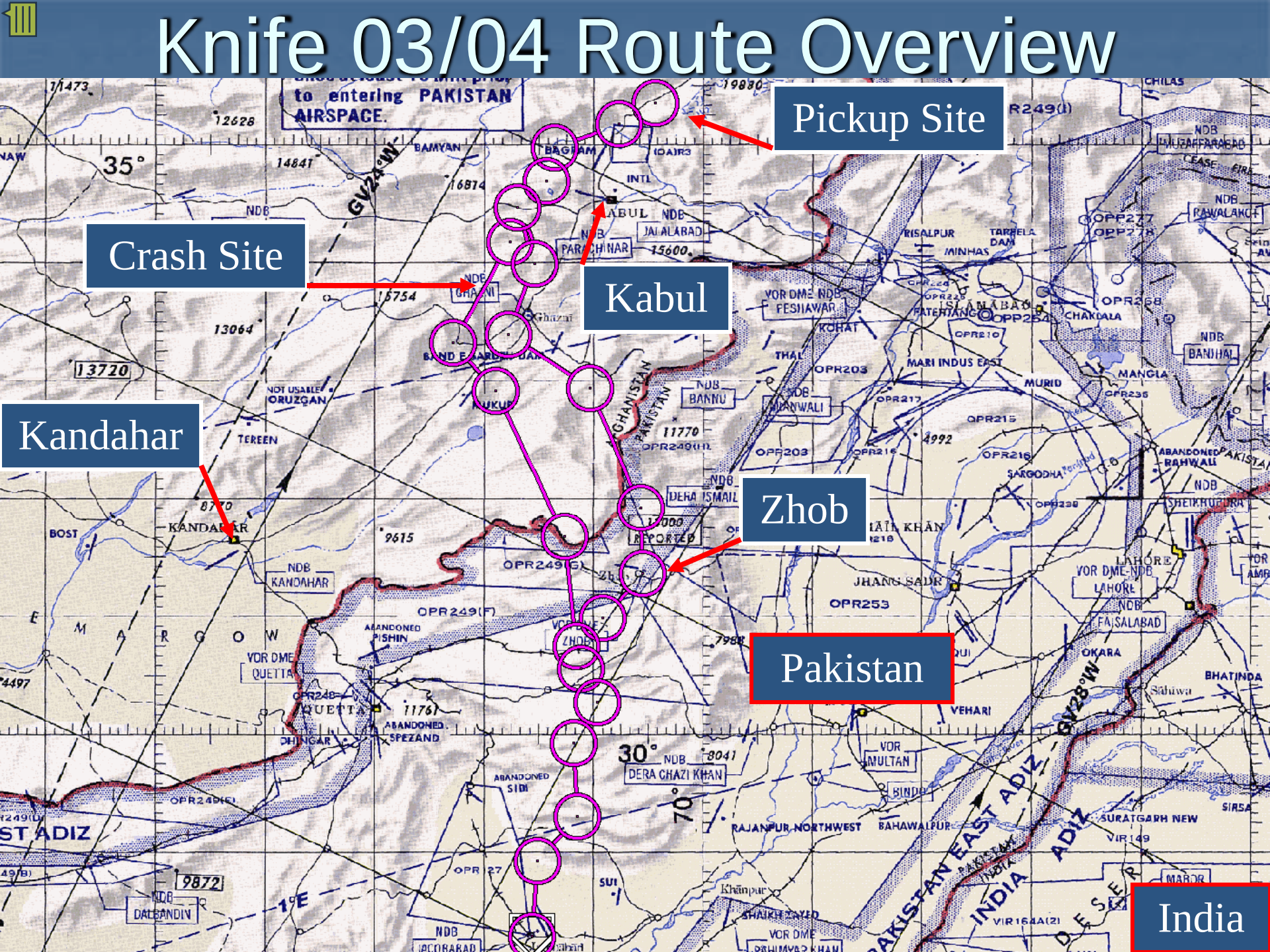
Knife 03



Knife 04



Knife 03/04 Route Overview



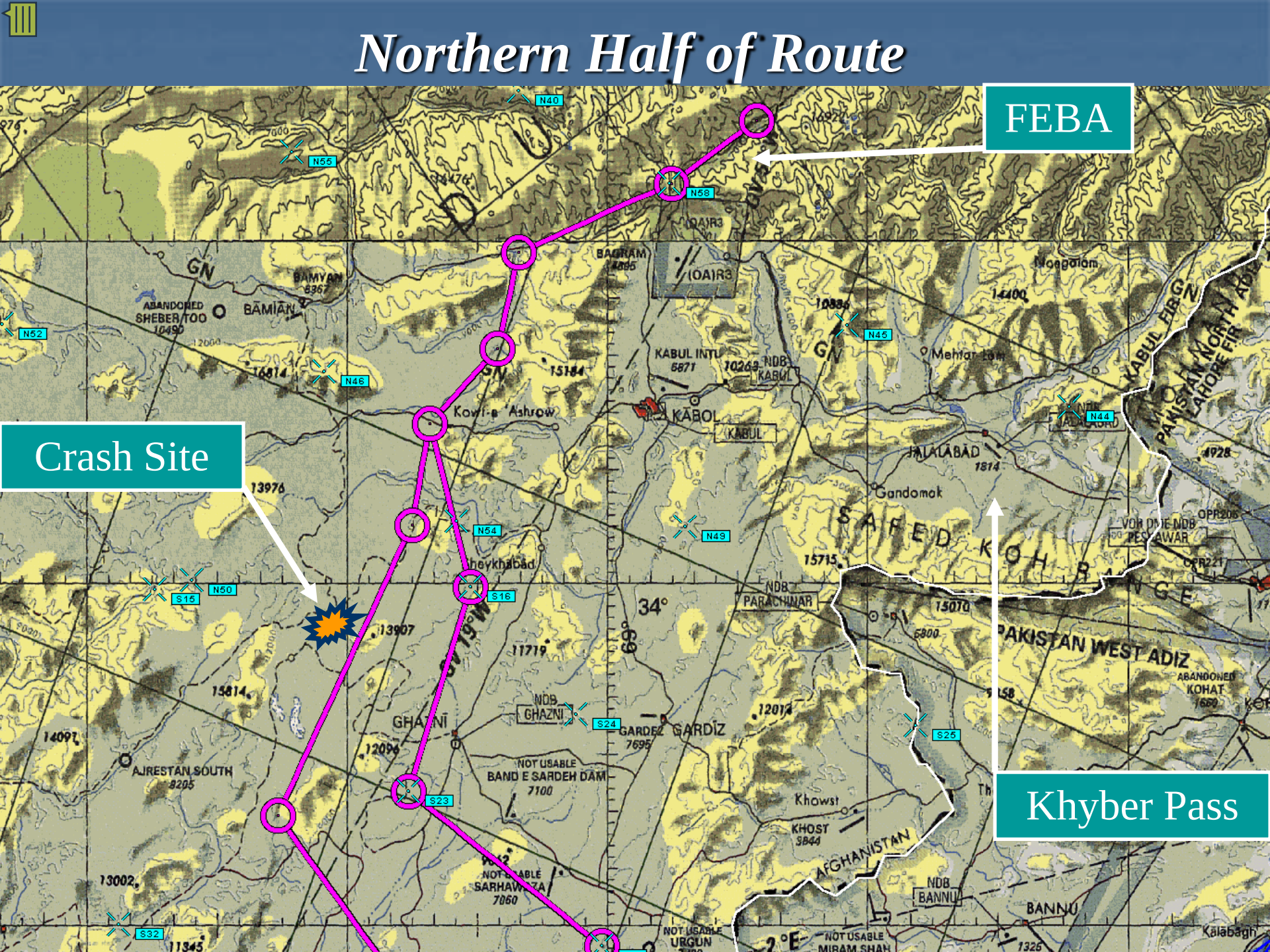
Sequence of Significant Events

- Departed FOB in Pakistan
- Crossed Border & Aerial Refueled with MC-130E
- Encountered Wx, took Lead and scouted passage through mountains
- Worsening Wx, Mission Abort
- Separated from K-03, maintained orbit over dry lake bed (10,000+ MSL)
- Confirmed K-03 on ground and moving South

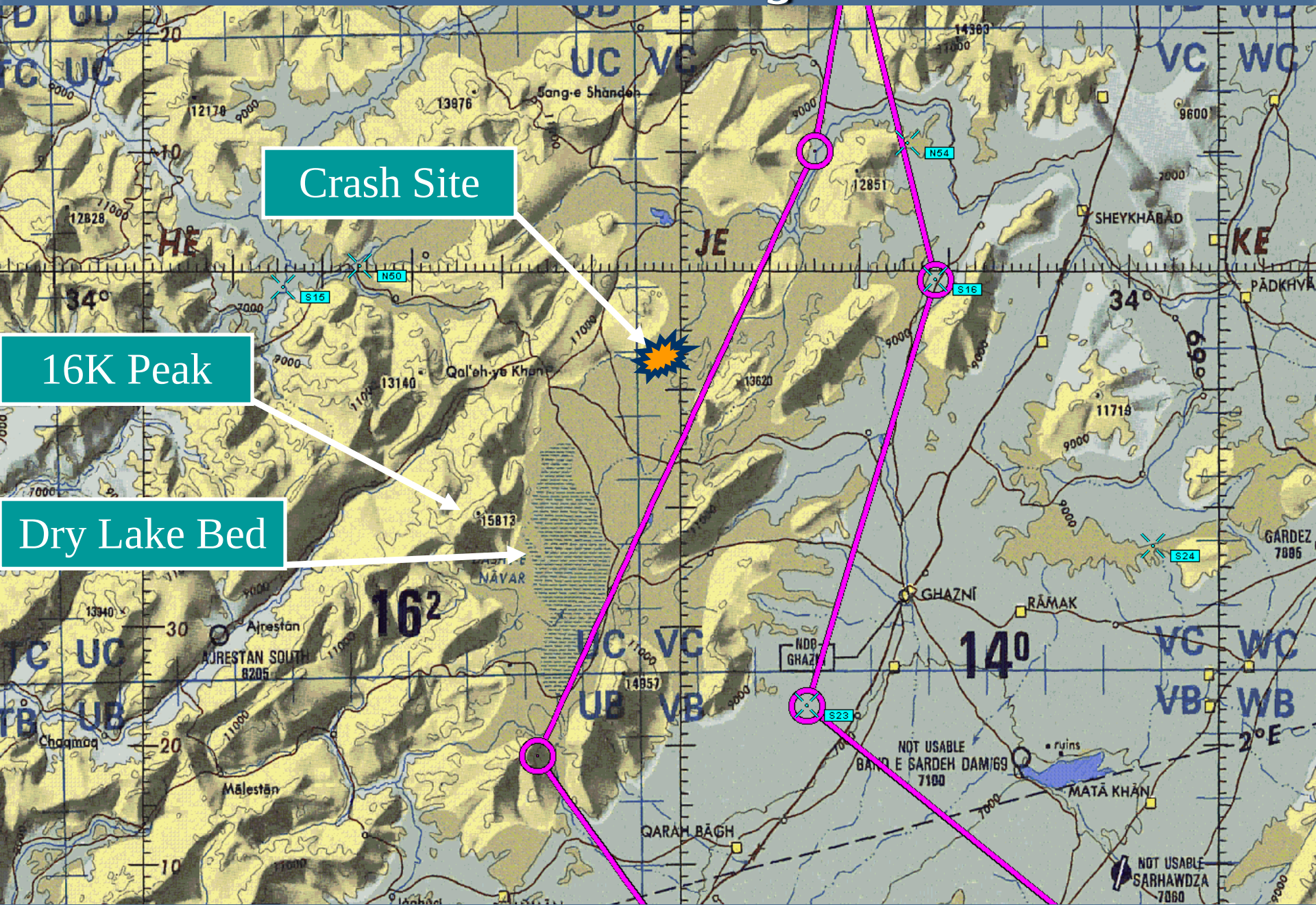
Sequence of Significant Events (Con't)

- Numerous attempts to push north to last known position of K-03
  - Turned back each time; closest was 3.2 NM
  - Other Options
- Maintained station as long as possible before departing for HAR
  - Worsening Wx to south forced near landing before reaching tanker
  - Descended lower to maintain VMC when engaged by RPG
- Rendezvoused with tanker, onloaded 9K of fuel

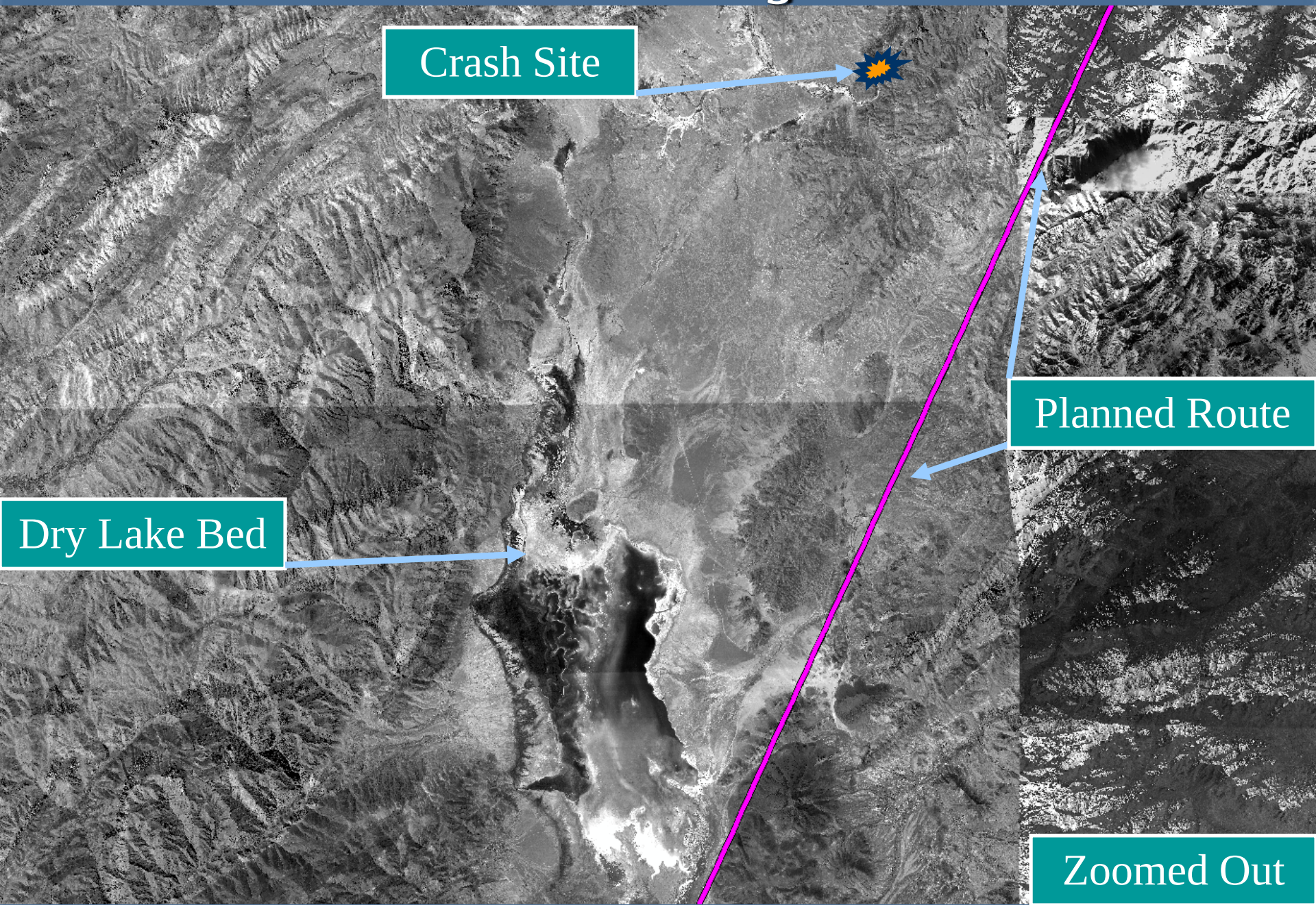
Northern Half of Route



Crash & Holding Area



Crash & Holding Area



Sequence of Significant Events (Con't)

- Informed by airborne assets over survivors that Wx was breaking
- 40 minute flight back north
- Established comms with Combat Controller on ground
  - Provided excellent SA of proposed LZ and marked his position on ground
- Visual contact established and proceeded north (2-3 miles) to dump fuel
  - Later reported by Taliban that biological warfare being employed as revenge for alleged shootdown

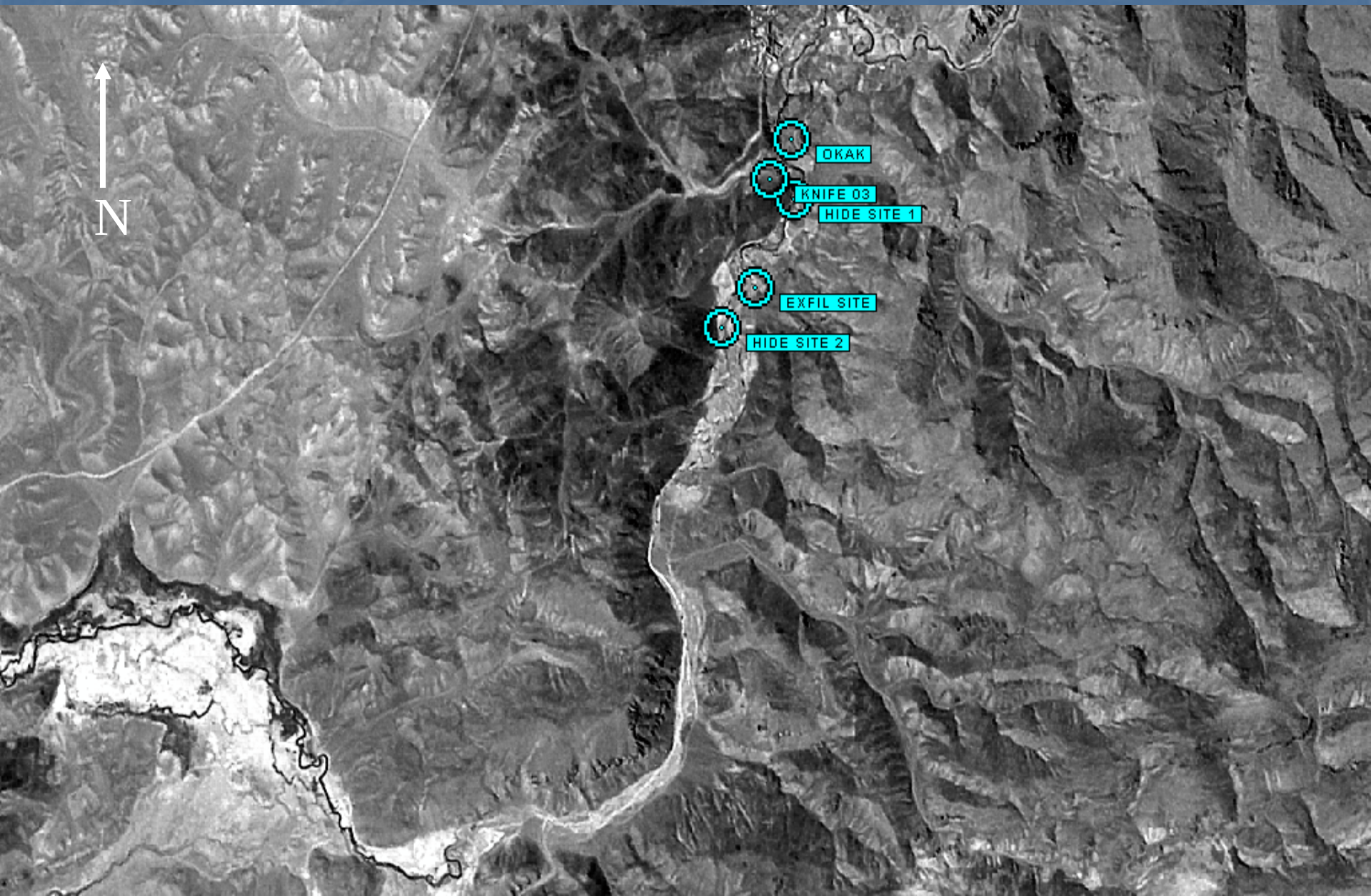
Crash and Pickup Site



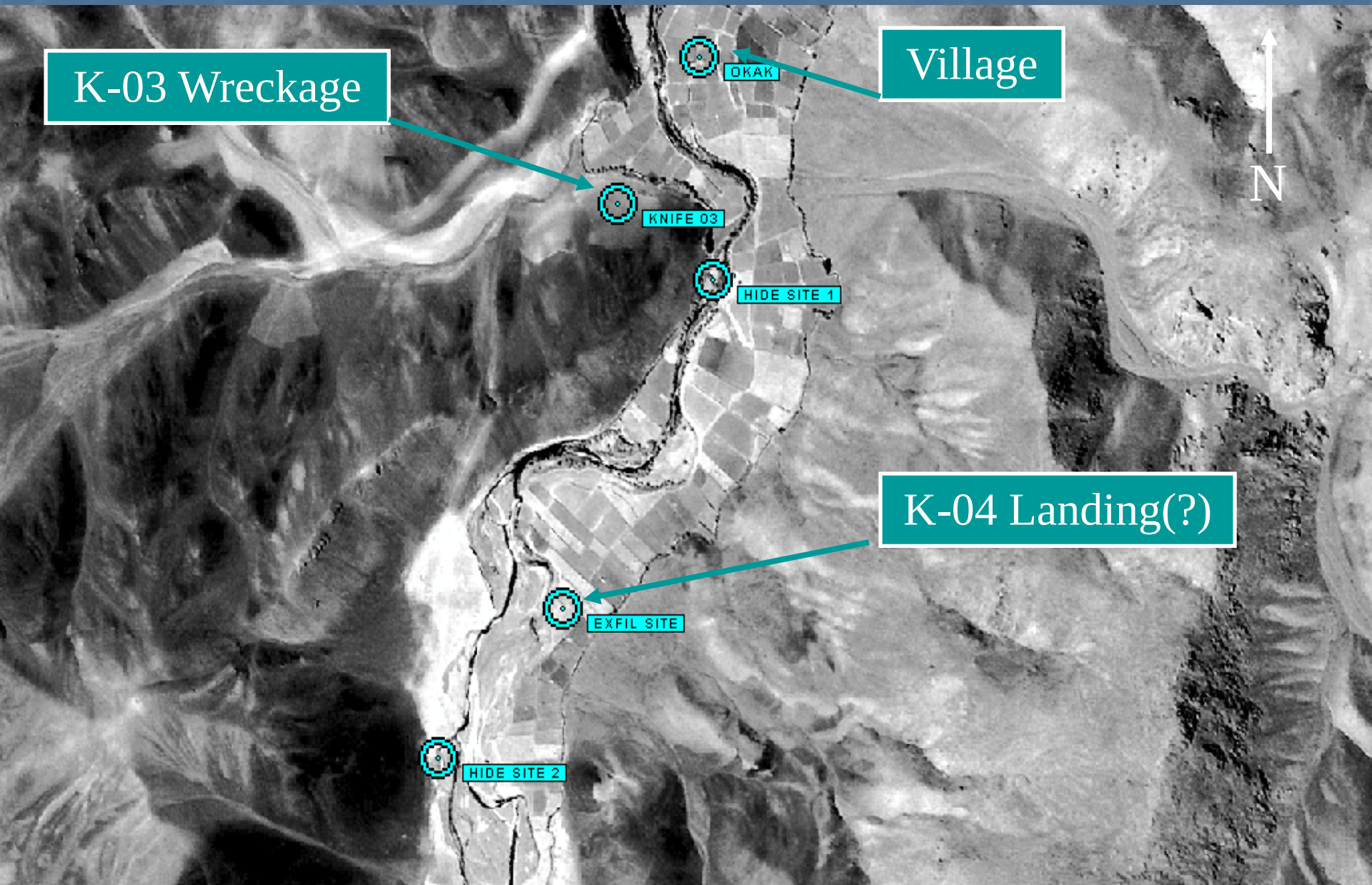
Sequence of Significant Events (Con't)

- After dumping to bare minimum of fuel, approach and landing accomplished
  - Whiteout (blowing snow from rotors) conditions, basically landed "blind" on Hover symbology
  - Reduced power margin; committed to approach passing through 75' AGL
- Special Tactic Team (Pararescuemen "PJ's") deplaned and authenticated survivors
- After loading crew of K-03, departed in whiteout conditions again

Crash and Pickup Site



Crash and Pickup Site



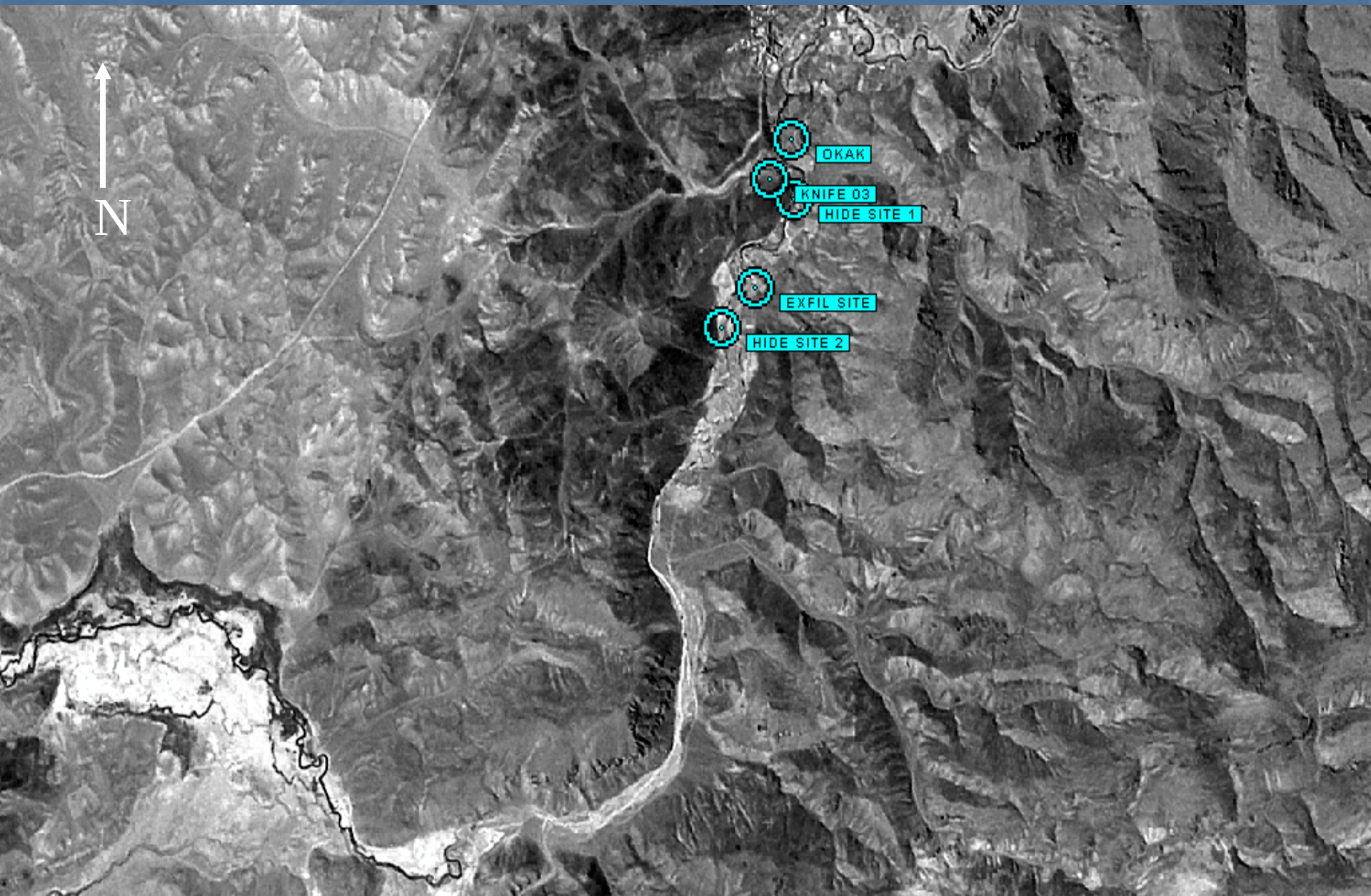
Sequence of Significant Events (Con't)

- Upon departure, quickly realized extremely marginal power
  - Aircraft initially came up to approximately 10-15 feet, then quickly settled down to 5' AGL
  - Rotor RPM (our lifeblood, similar to airspeed for fixed wing) drooped from 105% to 92-94% (Extreme Vibrations & Engine Overspeed)
  - Aircraft would NOT climb and was accelerating at extremely slow pace (10 – 12 kts groundspeed)
  - Consideration giving to raising landing gear to clear terrain and/or slide aircraft back on the ground

Sequence of Significant Events (Con't)

- Initial terrain encountered was sloping
  - Able to "climb with it" while remaining "In Ground Effect"
- After clearing small ridgeline, terrain dropped, allowing for airspeed for altitude exchange
- Whole sequence after takeoff estimated at close to a minute
- Infamous call for fuel

Crash and Pickup Site



Sequence of Significant Events (Con't)

- Rendezvoused with MC-130 at 11,000 MSL
- Could only take "sips" of fuel as exceeded dual engine service ceiling
- Escorted back to the border by F-14's
- Medical assessment and treatment going on in back of dark cabin



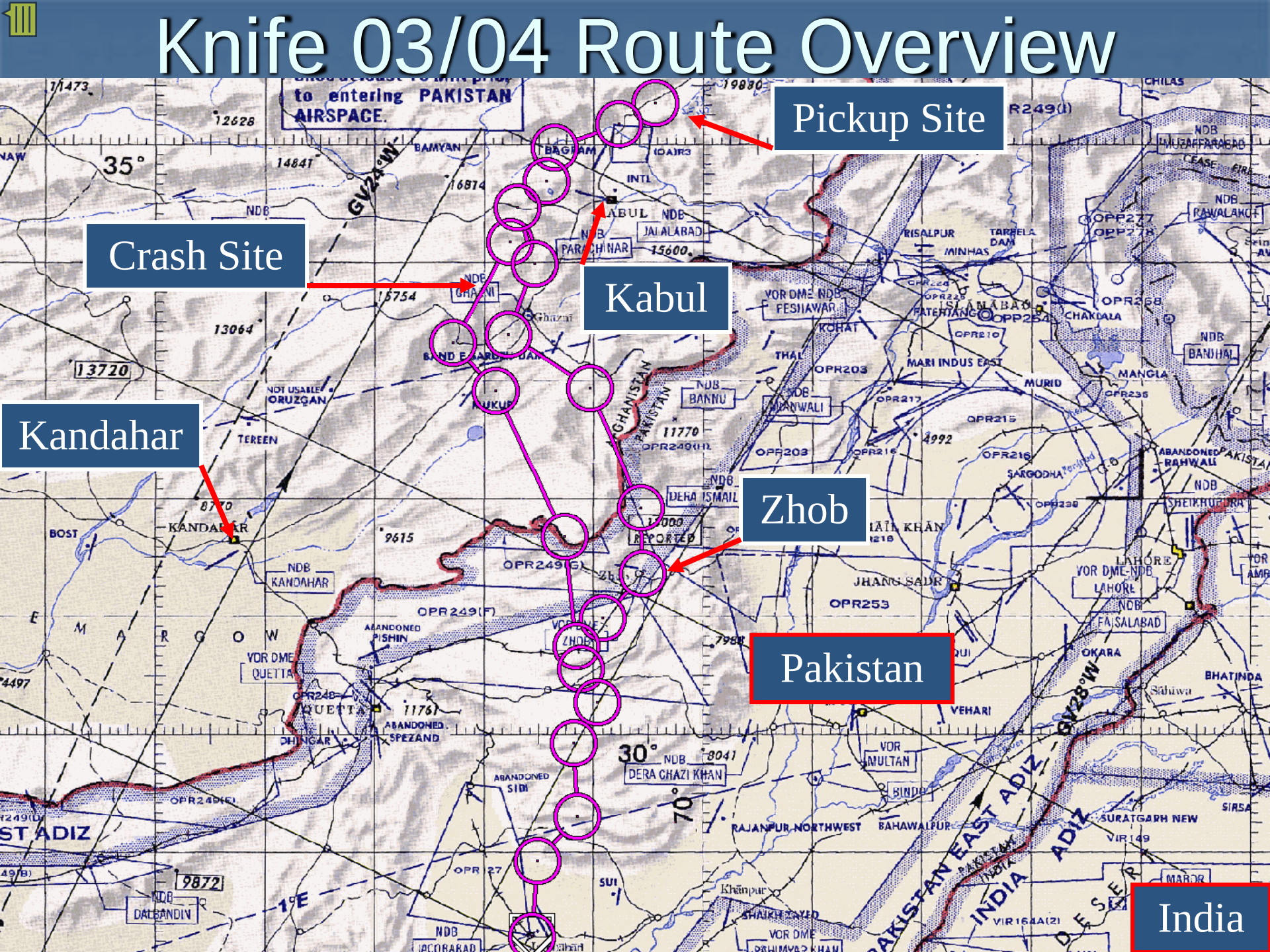
Sequence of Significant Events (Con't)

- Landed at Zhob for transload of injured survivors to another MC-130
  - Two other PAVE LOWS that had launched to get crew of K-03 were just arriving
  - After departing Zhob, they followed about 45 minutes in trail
- Upon return to FOB, vis was reported at 1/4 mile. Decided to climb above and risk small arms fire instead of "Paving" through on radar (Crew was exhausted)

Sequence of Significant Events (Con't)

- Onboard Radar letdown using FLIR to identify airport
  - Landed roughly 1/2 hour prior to sunrise
  - 10.6 hours of flight time
- Two MH-53's in trail took small arms fire through cockpit of lead aircraft. Flight Engineer wounded by shrapnel, received Purple Heart

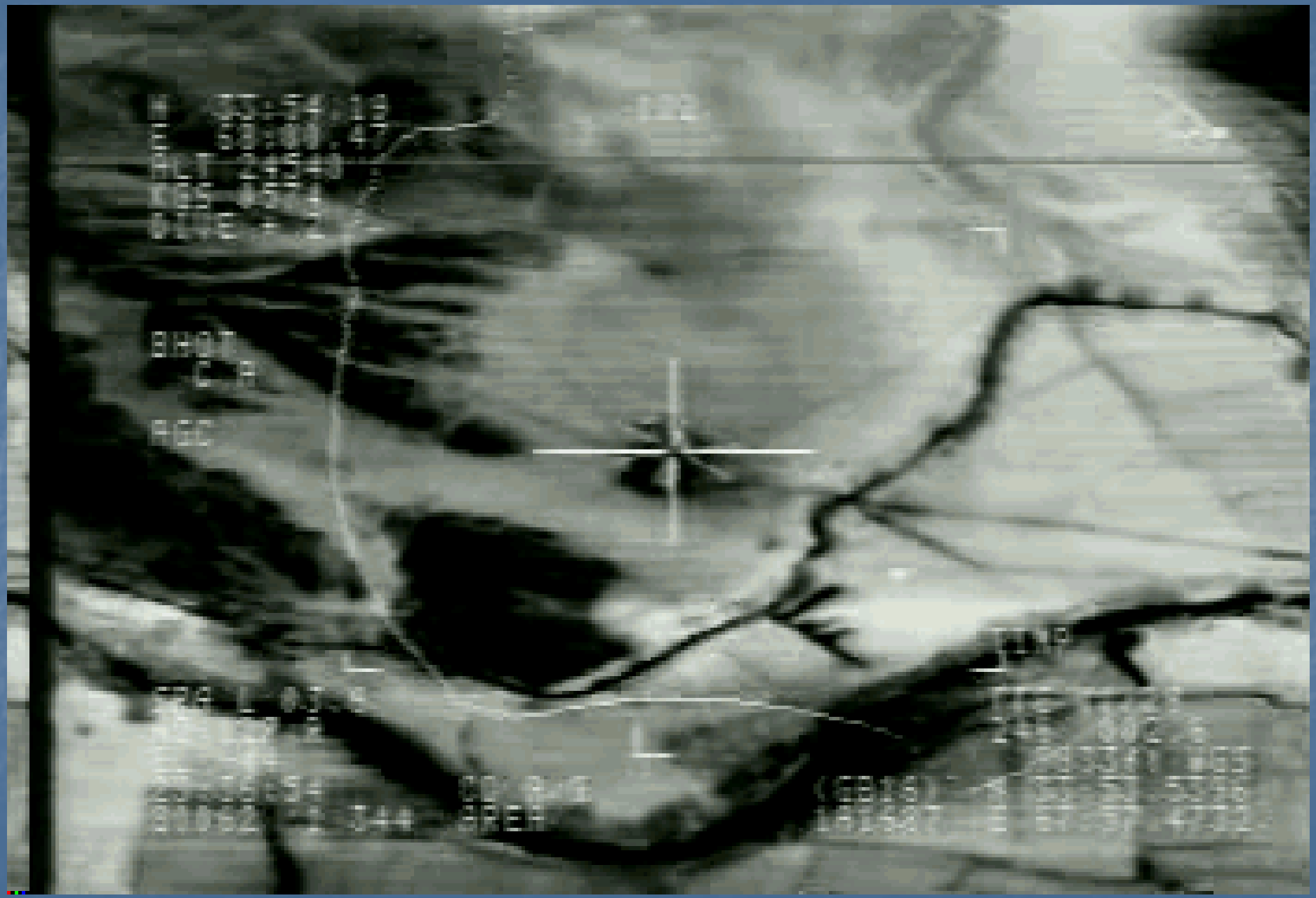
Knife 03/04 Route Overview



Knife 03 and 04



Destruction of Knife 03



Photographs from Arab TV video

- Taken at the crash site (next day??)
  - Aired 7 Nov 02
  - Many personal items left behind
  - Changed SOP for Life Support Equipment
- Excerpts of infamous UBL tape had wreckage scenes and personal equipment of Knife 03



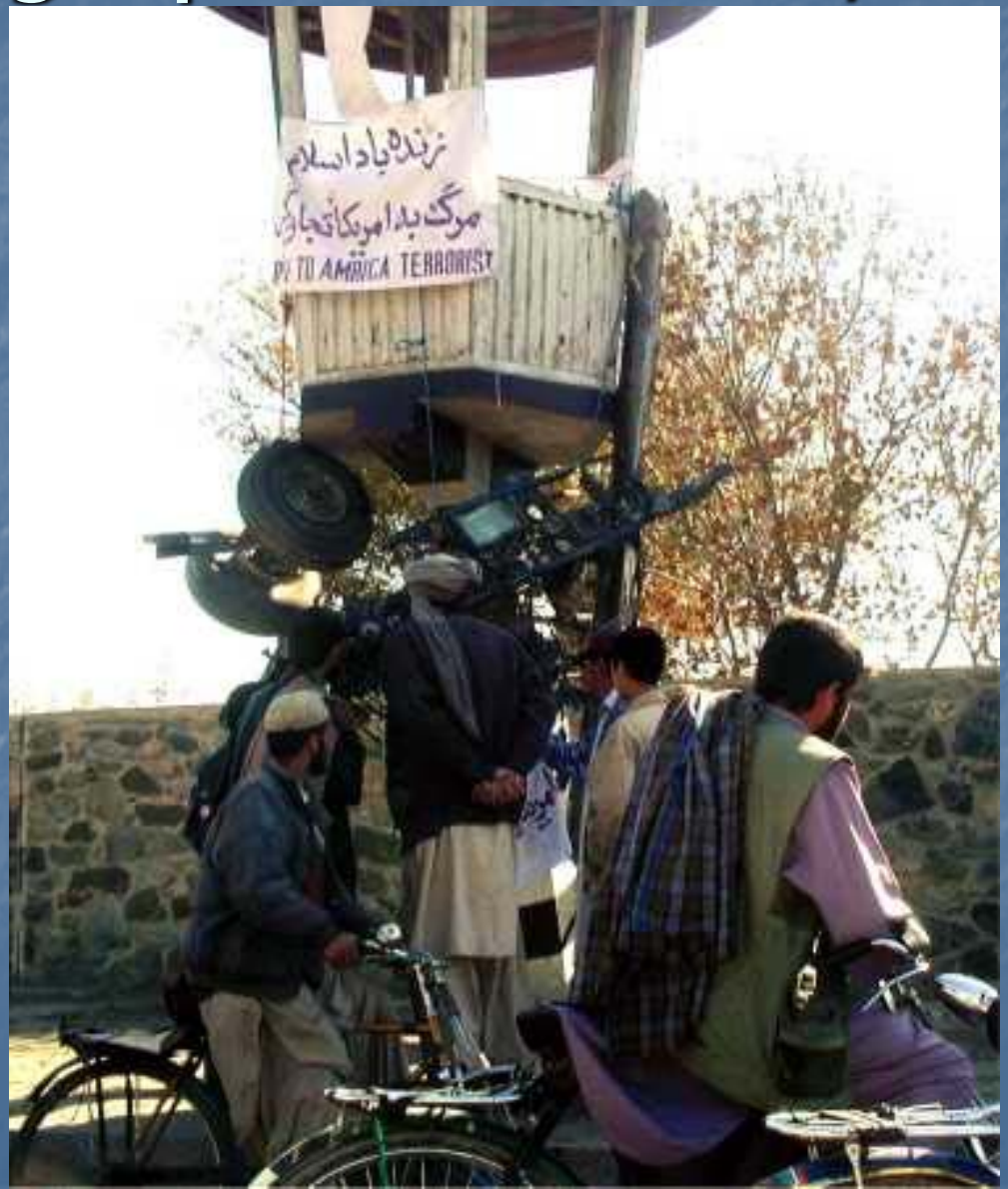
Source: Al-Jazirah Television 0542 GMT 5 Nov 2001


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DİE TAMRICA TERRORIZT

Cockpit Instrument Panel strung from a lightpole in Kabul, 7 Nov 02



Significant Awards from mission

- Crew of Knife 04 awarded the MacKay Trophy for 2001
  - Presented annually by the USAF Chief of Staff to Air Force member, crew or organization that makes the most meritorious flight of the year

Knife 04 with General Jumper (CSAF)



Significant Awards from mission

- Arab Linguist on K-03 received the Pitsenbarger Award
  - Annual award to enlisted member for heroic acts on-or-off duty that save lives or prevents injury
  - Diffused potential hostile situation when he confronted local villagers
  - He was one of more severely injured

Significant Awards from mission

- MC-130 crew earned the BG Ross Hoyt award for 2001
  - Presented annually by the Air Mobility Command to the most outstanding aerial refueling aircrew
  - Called the “Largest Rescue” since the Vietnam War

Significant Awards from mission

- Combat Controller on ground with K-03 was recognized as “USAF Combat Controller of the Year”
- Two PJ’s on ground were also recognized in yearly awards

Additional Crewmembers currently in 58 SOW

- Capt Frank Lazzara ~ Acft Cdr (K-03)
- TSgt Clint Grizzell ~ Aerial Gunner (K-03)
- TSgt Brian Cessop ~ Aerial Gunner (K-03)
- TSgt Al Auginaldo ~ Aerial Gunner (K-04)
- SSgt Mark Wolcott ~ Aerial Gunner (K-04)

Lessons Learned

- Prepare for the Unexpected
  - 80+ F when left Pakistan; sub-freezing on the ground at crash site with snow and ice
  - Ability to flex. Our Mantra…
- Life Support Gear – No Names or Units
- Ensure onboard Team callsign is briefed

Questions ??