FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (When Filled In)

RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION

DATE: FEB 8 1973

TO: (Organization and address)
40ARRSQ/CC
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96310

FROM: (Organization and address)
40ARRSQ/DO (NAQKJS)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96310

56CSGP (DPMS)

RECOMMENDATION

1. NAME OF DECORATION (Indicate number of clusters, if appropriate)
THE SILVER STAR (1OLC)

2. RECOMMENDATION IS BASED ON:
[X] Gallantry [ ] OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT
[ ] MERITORIOUS SERVICE (Based on completed period of service)

3. INCLUSIVE DATE(S) OF ACT, ACHIEVEMENT OR SERVICE
FROM: 18 November 1972 TO: 18 November 1972

PERSONAL DATA ON INDIVIDUAL BEING RECOMMENDED

4. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL
COCKERILL, JAMES W.

5. AFSN
N/A

6. SSAN
[redacted]

7. GRADE
Sergeant

8. DATE OF BIRTH
2 August 1951

9. PRESENT ORGANIZATION AND STATION
DET 12, 601 PHOTO SQ (MAC)(NAQNSO)
APO San Francisco 96310

10. PRESENT DUTY ASSIGNMENT
Combat Photographer

11. PERMANENT HOME ADDRESS
Box 153
Mayville, Mich 48744

12. ORGANIZATION OF NEXT DUTY ASSIGNMENT (Indicate, if not applicable)
N/A

13. ORGANIZATION, DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND GRADE AT TIME OF ACT OR SERVICE
DET 12, 601 PHOTO SQ(NAQNSO) Aerial
Combat Photographer, HH-53C
Sergeant, AFSC: A23651

14. EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROMOTION TO GRADE IN WHICH SERVING
1 May 1972

15. INDIVIDUAL'S SERVICE IN AIR FORCE SINCE ACT OR SERVICE HAS BEEN HONORABLE
[X] YES [ ] NO

16. DATE OF [X] REASSIGNMENT, [ ] RETIREMENT, [ ] OR SEPARATION: DEROS: 30 June 1973
THE CBPO WILL PROVIDE AND VERIFY THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:
RETIREMENT OR SEPARATION IS [ ] VOLUNTARY [ ] INVOLUNTARY, AND THE FOLLOWING SERVICE DATES APPLY
CDOS _____ TAFCSD _____ TAFMSD _____
PLSD _____ TFCSD _____ TMSD _____

17. PREVIOUS UNITED STATES DECORATIONS, COMPLETE AUTHORITY THEREFOR, AND INCLUSIVE DATES OF SERVICE RECOGNIZED (Do not include service medals, battle credits, unit citations or foreign decorations)
FINAL DECISION

None

AWARD	OLC
SS	1

18. ARE OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AWARDS TO THIS INDIVIDUAL PENDING (If yes, state awards)
[X] YES [ ] NO SS (26 Aug 72)

19. ARE OTHER INDIVIDUALS BEING RECOMMENDED FOR THE SAME ACT OR SERVICE
[X] YES [ ] NO (5)

20a. IF ANSWER TO ITEM 19 IS YES, ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE OTHER INDIVIDUALS FORWARDED AS A PART OF THIS RECOMMENDATION
[X] YES [ ] NO

b. IF ANSWER TO ITEM 20a IS NO, EXPLAIN REASON FOR DELAY, INCLUDING DATE RECOMMENDATION(S) WILL BE FORWARDED, AND IDENTIFY THE INDIVIDUAL(S) BY GRADE, NAME, SERVICE NUMBER, PRESENT ORGANIZATION, STATION, AND DECORATION RECOMMENDED.
N/A

EETMYF

21. HAS PREVIOUS AWARD BEEN MADE TO THIS INDIVIDUAL FOR THIS ACT OR SERVICE
[ ] YES [X] NO

22. IF AWARD IS POSTHUMOUS, OR INDIVIDUAL RECOMMENDED IS MISSING IN ACTION OR A PRISONER OF WAR, LIST NAME, ADDRESS AND RELATIONSHIP OF NEXT OF KIN.
N/A

23. DATE WHICH PRESENTATION OF AWARD IS DESIRED, IF APPROVED
Upon approval

24. IF APPROVED, FORWARD FOR PRESENTATION TO (Organization and address)
56CSGP (DPMS)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96310

AF FORM JUN 68 642 PREVIOUS EDITION OF THIS FORM WILL BE USED UNTIL STOCK IS EXHAUSTED

FEB 20 1973

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25. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION *(Description of the act, achievement or service, including specific dates, places and facts. If additional space needed, use plain 8 x 10½ bond paper, the last sheet of which must be signed by the recommending individual in addition to the signature required on this form)*

The narrative description for Sgt Cockerill's achievement is contained in the AF Form 642 for Capt John M. Gillespie, III, [redacted], dated _____.

[illegible]	CTC

USAF DECISION

26. TYPED NAME, GRADE AND TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL INITIATING RECOMMENDATION	27. SIGNATURE
RALPH K. GEE, MAJOR, USAF Operations Officer	Ralph K. Gee

28. ATTACHMENTS

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION *(Citation and supporting statements or other official documents)*
1	Citation

☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1972—467-756

25. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION *(Description of the act, achievement or service, including specific dates, places and facts. If additional space needed, use plain 8 x 10½ bond paper, the last sheet of which must be signed by the recommending individual in addition to the signature required on this form)*

The crewmembers of an HH-53C Helicopter, Jolly Green 03, distinguished themselves by gallantry on 18 November 1972, while effecting the rescue of two downed American airmen from a heavily defended area of North Vietnam. On that date, four (4) Super Jolly Green HH-53C helicopters were launched in support of Search and Rescue (SAR) activities for Bobbin 05 Alpha and Bobbin 05 Bravo, two F-105 crewmembers whose aircraft had been shot down the previous day over North Vietnam by a Surface-to-Air Missiel (SAM). At 0200L, Jolly Green 01 and 02 were launched from Nakhon Phanom for the rescue attempt. Thirty minutes later, at 0230, Jolly Green 03 and 04 were launched, to back up the first two helicopters, as a precautionary measure. When Jolly Green 01 and 02 arrived in the area of the two downed airmen, they discovered a thick cloud deck from 1500 feet to 8000 feet completely obscurring the rescue area. Since they were in mountainous terrain, it was decided to hold the helicopters in a safe area in the possibility that the weather might clear. The two helicopters were moved further southwest and the Sandys, A-7 fighters, continued their efforts to pinpoint the position of the downed crewmen and suppress heavy small arms and antiaircraft fire in the area. Jolly Green 03 and 04 arrived on scene as Jolly Green 01 and 02 were enroute to King 21, an HC-130 tanker. Jolly Green 03 and 04 refueled first and then proceeded to the orbit area while Jolly Green 01 and 02 took on fuel. Because the weather did not seem to be improving, it was decided to make a rescue attempt using Jolly Green 03 and 04. However, this would involve some very hazardous flying as the cloud deck obscured most of the high peaks in the area. A small open area was finally found some distance away from the survivors, but it was located over a heavily populated village. Since this was the only open area in the vicinity the aircraft commander of Jolly Green 03, Captain John M. Gillespie, decided to attempt the penetration. With the Copilot, First Lieutenant Bryan L. McDowell calling out altitudes and airspeeds, Captain Gillespie started a fast spiralling descent over the village. After descending about two thousand feet, enemy 23MM antiaircraft (AAA) opened fire on Jolly Green 03 from the village and roads immediately below. Since there were no Sandy escorts in the vicinity, Captain Gillespie initiated a climb back through the overcast while Staff Sergeant Richard L. Simmon, the Flight Engineer, and Staff Sergeant Gary T. Osborne, a Pararescue Specialist, returned the fire with their 7.62MM miniguns. The extremely accurate minigun fire by Sergeants Simmon and Osborne temporarily suppressed the AAA activity until Jolly Green 03 could climb to a safe altitude. Jolly Green 03 and 04 returned to the forward holding point and then found a small break in the overcast. After the two aircraft acquired sufficient separation from each other, they both began another descent. Jolly Green 03 broke out of the clouds 1000 feet above a valley and Jolly Green 04 broke out some distance away, out of sight of Jolly Green 03. Due to the cloud deck above and the mountainous terrain all around them, Jolly Green 03 and 04 found it impossible to rejoin or establish radio communication with each other or the Sandys. After navigating around the valleys for forty-five minutes, their fuel was getting low and they made another IFR climb through the overcast and proceeded to the tanker. During the climb, radar warning signals were received which indicated that they were being tracked by AAA or Surface-to Air Missiles (SAM) radar, but due to terrain and weather,

26. TYPED NAME, GRADE AND TITLE OF INDIVIDUAL INITIATING RECOMMENDATION	27. SIGNATURE
RALPH K. GEE, MAJOR, USAF Operations Officer	Ralph K Gee

28. ATTACHMENTS

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION *(Citation and supporting statements or other official documents)*
1	Citation
2	Eyewitness statement by Major Colin A. Clarke

☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1972—467-756

CONTINUED, Item 25, AF Form 642, Recommendation for the Silver Star Medal to Captain John M. Gillespie, III, [redacted].

evasive manuvering was impossible and this climb had to be continued. After refueling, Jolly Green 03 and 04 returned to the forward holding point. Jolly Green 03 made several attempts to penetrate the undercast. At one point his radar altimeter indicated that the ground was only 200 feet below him but he didn't have the terrain in sight and had to initiate another climb. He finally broke through the clouds a second time, but once again radio problems, weather and navigation problems prevented Jolly Green 03 and Sandy 01 from joining up for a run-in. Jolly Green 03 and 04 and the Sandy aircraft again returned to the tankers for much needed fuel. At this point it had been over 6 hours since the first attempt had been made to penetrate the clouds. During this time, enemy troops had been moving into positions around the two downed airmen, setting a trap for the Search and Rescue (SAR) forces. Time, the constant adversary of the SAR forces, began to take its toll. Jolly Green 03 began experiencing control problems; the cyclic trim was inoperable which compelled one of the pilots to continually have his hand on the cyclic stick at all times. The aircraft chip detector warning lights indicated that the intermediate gear box to the tail rotor could possibly be failing. In addition, the nozzle on the refueling probe was leaking fuel. Captain Gillespie and Lieutenant McDowell, both extremely fatigued, were taking turns flying the aircraft and navigating. All of the supporting aircraft, i.e. the F-4 fighters providing protection from MIG attacks and the SAM suppression aircraft, were running out of fuel and endurance. With the weather rapidly deteriorating all the time, it was decided that one more attempt to rescue the two downed men would be made. Sandy 01 used his navigation system, radar altimeter and map display system to get below the undercast into a valley where he was holding. With Lt McDowell calling out altitudes from the radar altimeter, monitoring engine instruments and transferring fuel, Jolly Green 03 finally broke through the cloud deck and joined up with Sandy 01 in the valley. They were more than 45 miles from the survivors position and the route to the survivors would require extremely accurate low level flying through densely populated valleys. With Pararescue Specialist Staff Sergeant Kenneth J. Musnicki, manning the number one minigun and Sergeant Osborne manning the number three minigun, Sergeant Simmon moved back to the number two minigun position and Sergeant James W.Cockeril an Aerial Combat Photographer, stood in the open doorway of the number two gun position with his AR-15 rifle. The winding route down the valleys subjected Jolly Green 03 to the constant hazard of ground fire. The low hanging clouds caused frequent loss of visual contact between Jolly Green 03 and Sandy 01. Due to Lt McDowell's superb navigation and Captain Gillespie's exceptional flying ability, Jolly Green 03 arrived at the approximate position of the survivors after flying through valleys for over 25 minutes. They were now instructed to hold approximately one mile from the survivors while Sandy 01 briefed the two downed airmen on the pickup procedures. Jolly Green 03 was then cleared in for the rescue attempt on Bobbin 05 Bravo. Flying at near maximum airspeed at treetop level, Captain Gillespie was constantly dodging small arms fire. Approximately ½ mile from the survivor, a 12.7MM antiaircraft gun began firing at Jolly Green 03 from almost point blank range. Sergeant Simmon and Osborne immediately returned heavy fire to the gun position and silenced it. The run-in continued towards Bravo but due to an erroneous vector from him his position was overflown. Jolly Green 03 started a 180 degree turn back to Bravo when Sandy 01 radioed a warning to remain below the crest of the ridge line as more AAA was located on top of the ridge.

CONTINUED, Item 25, AF Form 642, Recommendation for the Silver Star Medal to Captain John M. Gillespie, III, [redacted].

Two more Sandys were now laying a smoke screen to block Jolly Green 03 from the heavy concentration of guns located on the rice delta in the valley. Another smoke screen was laid on the western side of the ridge which blocked off four 37MM AAA gun positions to the southwest. As Jolly Green 03 completed his turn, Captain Gillespie instructed Bobbin 05 Bravo to ignite his smoke flare and talk the helicopter into his position. When the smoke flare was ignited, the survivor was immediately sighted by Captain Gillespie, and Sergeant Simmon. Sergeant Simmon proceeded to talk Captain Gillespie into a 15 to 20 foot hover above the exposed survivor, while Sergeants Osborne and Musnicki and Cockerill returned fire directed at them from the 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock and 3 o'clock positions. This quieted the groundfire for the short period of time it took to get the survivor aboard - and, miraculously, prevented the helicopter from being hit. By this time Sergeant Simmon had the rescue penetrator on the ground and the survivor was strapped on. While he was strapping himself to the penetrator, a small caliber AAA gun began firing less than 300 yards directly in front of the helicopter. Lt McDowell called out the gun position to the Sandys and only through the quick reaction of the Sandy flight was Jolly Green 03 able to escape severe battle damage. When Bobbin 05 Bravo was safely aboard, Captain Gillespie, disregarding the known risk of enemy groundfire, began hovering the aircraft in search of the second survivor, Bobbin 05 Alpha. He was located about 500 feet down from the crest of the ridge in a small cove created by two converging ridges. Captain Gillespie hovered his aircraft towards Bobbin 05 Alpha with his tail and number one gun position pointing towards the western valley in order to enable his gunners to return expected groundfire. With the Sandys flying a daisy chain around Jolly Green 03, Captain Gillespie hovered over Bobbin 05 Alpha and, after an approximate two minute hover, the survivor was brought aboard. Jolly Green 03 then egressed the area to the northwest along the ridge line and about 500 feet below the crest of the ridge. Again small arms and AAA fire broke out at eleven, three and seven o'clock positions. Sergeants Simmon and Osborne quickly returned the three and seven o'clock gunfire, but the number one minigun jammed because of a bent round. Sergeant Musnicki immediately grabbed his AR-15 rifle and with the aid of Sergeant Cockerill who had an M-60 machine gun began returning the fire that was coming from the eleven o'clock position. The Sandys quickly quieted the groundfire but during their pass Sandy 01 took a hit in his right auxiliary tank which exploded and seriously damaged the aircraft. Sandy 01 immediately exited the area in preparation for a possible bailout, while Sandy 02 quickly responded to help Jolly Green 03 exit the area. The exit was again low level, high speed run through the valleys to avoid weather and detection by SAMS. Sandy 02 and flight were now beginning to lay suppressive fire on roads ahead of Jolly Green 03 to insure their safe passage. Again due to weather, a longer-than-planned route was made to arrive at the edge of the prebriefed SAM defense area and 4 to 8 miles short of the forward orbit area. During this time, the Sandys and Jolly Green were getting indications of SAM radar tracking, but by staying close to the ground they avoided possible launches. Jolly Green 03 began his climb into the totally overcast deck knowing that his exposed position would now enable the enemy AAA and SAM radar to pinpoint his position. No launches were observed by Jolly Green 03 but Jolly Green 04, orbiting above the cloud deck observed six surface-to-air missiles break through the undercast and explode Jolly Green 03 rejoined with Jolly Green 04 and both aircraft quickly departed the area.

CONTINUED, Item 25, AF Form 642, Recommendation for the Silver Star Medal to Captain John M. Gillespie, III, [redacted]

Both Jolly Green helicopters made it back to Nakhon Phanom without further incident and Sandy 01 was able to divert safely to an airfield in South Vietnam. Jolly Green 03 landed after flying for 9.3 hours, the majority of that time without cyclic stick trim, which required that Captain Gillespie and Lieutenant McDowell continually "hand-fly" the aircraft. For almost an hour they had been constantly exposed to enemy small arms fire, AAA and surface-to-air missiles. This daring rescue of two downed American airmen is a testament to the great courage and devotion to duty displayed by the crew of Jolly Green 03 and I highly recommend that they be awarded the Silver Star.

The crew member of Jolly Green 03:

Capt John M. Gillespie, [redacted]
1STLT Bryan L. McDowell
SSgt Richard L. Simmon,
SSgt Kenneth J. Musnick
SSgt Gary T. Osborne, 2
Sgt James W. Cockerill,

Ralph K. Gee
RALPH K. GEE, MAJOR, USAF
Operations Officer

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
40TH AEROSPACE RESCUE & RECOVERY SQUADRON (MAC)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96310

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: CC

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Decoration

TO: HQ PACAF

1. Recommend approval of the award of the Silver Star to the below listed Personnel:

Capt John M. Gillespie, [redacted]
1StLt Bryan L. McDowell,
SSgt Richard L. Simmon,
SSgt Kenneth J. Musnicki
SSgt Gary T. Osborne, 2
Sgt James W. Cockerill,

2. The attached recommendations are submitted late because of the heavy flying commitment imposed upon the Awards and Decorations personnel.

HUBERT M. BERTHOLD, Lt Colonel, USAF
Commander

6 Atch
a/s

FROM: Maj Clarke, Sandy 01

SUBJECT: Heroism of Capt John M. Gillespie during the rescue of Bobbin 05 A & B on 18 Nov 1972

TO: 40th ARS/CC

1. I witnessed the following heroism and performance of Capt John M. Gillespie, pilot of Jolly 03, during the SAR on 18 Nov 1972. This mission resulted in the successful recovery of two downed airmen from a very heavily defended area of North Vietnam. As on-scene commander and escort for Jolly 03 I was witness to the acts of heroism by Capt Gillespie that made the final rescue efforts successful. This was the first actual rescue attempt utilizing A7D aircraft as Sandys, escorting Jollys and protecting them and survivors.

2. The rescue attempt was originally planned for dawn but was delayed by extremely poor weather and formidable enemy defenses that included several SAM sites close to the survivors. A thick low overcast cloud layer covered the survivors' area and the mountains to the West. The mountains provided the only suitable protection from SAMs for the vulnerable helicopter during it's final ingress to the survivors' location. Almost six hours were spent searching for a way to get below the solid clouds and find a usable route to the survivors. Twice pickup times were set and had to be called off as fuel ran low and we were unable to get A7Ds and a Jolly together under the clouds. On the second attempt a possible route was found but would require a rapid and well timed penetration through thick clouds into a narrow mountain valley. Everything hinged on this last attempt. If it was called off we would have to give up. All the supporting aircraft, Mig Cap and SAM suppression were running out of fuel and endurance.

3. As the Sandys returned to the area from refueling Capt Gillespie had already positioned his helicopter over the planned letdown point above the overcast. He advised me that his radar altimeter indicated he was over the valley as I approached. I descended under him and emerged into a cloud enclosed valley. Capt Gillespie then unhesitatingly descended into the clouds and with the aid of his radar altimeter and heading directions I was able to give him by using my DF equipment, Jolly emerged from the clouds into the valley. He also must have had an urge to climb to a safe height while descending between the mountains in the clouds but knowing that our failure would surely mean the capture or death of the Bobbin crew he continued down. We proceeded immediately toward the survivors with Jolly 03 expertly following my directions and disregarding the risk. Normally the Jolly would have at least two Sandys marking his route and suppressing fire along it. We could not delay and did not have the armed escort until nearing the survivors where they could get under the weather. Often on our ingress I was forced to fly way ahead of Jolly 03 before finding a big enough valley to circle back in and provide directions. That Capt Gillespie was able to follow me or my directions through those cloudy valleys is amazing still. He would see me disappear

over a misty ridge and follow maybe not spotting me again for several miles. As we neared the survivors I proceeded ahead to get them ready. At that time a 51MM gun position was spotted shooting at me from the ridgetop just above one of the survivors. While all the Sandys were completely occupied attempting to suppress the close in guns and laying a smoke screen to block the view of the big AAA guns, Capt Gillespie flew right to the survivors. Despite all the confusion and shooting he calmly helped the survivors vector him over their positions and had them aboard in record time. During the hover for the second survivor Jolly 03 was having a gun duel with a gun site that was hidden from the Sandys by a low cloud. As Jolly 03 started to egress I took a severe hit and had to immediately depart. The courage and professionalism displayed by Capt Gillespie during this extremely hazardous rescue deserve the highest praise.

Colin A. Clarke

COLIN A. CLARKE, Maj, USAF
Sandy 01