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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR FORCE HISTORICAL RESEARCH AGENCY (AFHRA)
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

October 2, 2009
FOIA 2009-03965-F
RFI # 2009-0940

AFHRA/RSA
600 Chennault Circle
Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6424 USA

Mr. John Greenewald, Jr.
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Greenewald,

This is in response to your September 17, 2009, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request received in this office on 17 September 2009 pertaining to the document with IRIS number 00903891, Call name K239.0512-103. As a FOIA request, it has been assigned the number 2009-03965-F. The request for information number assigned by this office is 09-0940.

I have copied and enclosed the requested document.

Please be advised that under the Freedom of Information Act you can be charged \$.15 per page copied. The first 100 pages are provided to you for free. However, the document you requested is a total of 69 so there is no balance due for this FOIA.

Should you have questions, please refer to the FOIA number 2009-03965-F and RFI (request for information) number 09-0940.

Respectfully,

Cathy Cox
Cathy Cox, Archivist
AFHRA/Research

Enclosure:

1. Copy of original RFI (request for information)
2. Copy of requested document with IRIS number 00903891.

09-0940

Dear Sir,

This is a non-commercial request made under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 5 U.S.C. S 552. Pursuant to the U. S. OPEN Records Act of 2007, my FOIA requester status as a "representative of the news media" -- a status entitling me to an unlimited search processing my request, and the first 100 pages free of charge. For examples of my various publication credits in this regard, I refer you to my radio network, and my own personal radio show (syndicated on FM and AM stations) at <http://www.blackvaultradio.com>. My internet website <http://www.theblackvault.com> which holds a vast government document database, along with many freelance articles that I have written, which have also been published in magazines and websites, including OpEdNews.com, UFO Magazine, FATE Magazine, and others.

Additionally, since the document is listed as under 100 pages, it should not incur a charge.

I respectfully request a copy of the following document:

IRIS Number: 00903891

Main: MILLER, W. H.

Call: K239.0512-103

If the document is considered currently and properly classified, I respectfully request a mandatory declassification review (MDR) of the document, as it is more than 25 years old and should be considered for declassification.

Thank you so much for your time, and I am very much looking forward to your response. Please know that electronic delivery of the requested material or correspondence related to this case is preferred and accepted in lieu of paper copies via snail mail.

Sincerely,

John Greenewald, Jr.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Main: MILLER, W. H.

RECTYPE: ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW **Call:** K239.0512-103

IRIS Number: 903891

BegDate: 01-01-1963 **EndDate:** 07-31-1967 **PubDate:** 01-21-1969 **Author:**

Title:

Title Extension:

Title Added Entries:

Class: UNCLASSIFIED **LNFT:** 0 **AudioRec:** **NumPages:** 70 **MajCom:**

Subject: FORWARD AIR CONTROLLERS CLOSE AIR SUPPORT, ARMY, VIETNAM HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS AIR STRIKE REQUESTS ARMY SUPPORT FROM AIR FORCE B-52 AIRCRAFT STRIKES AC-47 AIRCRAFT STRIKES AIR STRIKES

Abstract: BATTALION COMMANDER; PRAISES TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT AND USAF FORWARD AIR CONTROLLERS (FAC) IN PARTICULAR; DISCUSSES FAC PROCEDURES; PROPER USE OF MIX OF HELICOPTERS GUNSHIPS, ARTILLERY, TACTICAL AIR, PECULIAR NATURE OF WAR AND PROBLEMS OF GROUND COMMANDER WHO MUST SELECT PROPER TACTICS AND USE OF AIR SUPPORT; PROBLEMS OF KEEPING POSITIONS OF WIDELY SCATTERED FRIENDLY FORCES MARKED--FAC USEFUL IN THIS REGARD; AIR STRIKE REQUEST SYSTEM; COMMENTS ON B-52 STRIKES AND AC-47 GUNSHIPS, WHICH HE TERMS GOOD FOR BOTH ILLUMINATION AND SUPPRESSIVE FIRES; SHORT ROUNDS; AIR STRIKES TO KILL SNIPER.

DateRcvd: **AddDate:** **IRISRef:**

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DNNotes: TRANSCRIPT; OHI OF LT COL WILLIAM H. MILLER (USA), CONDUCTED BY MAJ SAMUEL E. RIDDLEBARGER AT FT BENNING, GA; PART OF CORONA HARVEST COLLECTION; TAPE NOT MICROFILMED; TAPE TIME - 00:52. DOCUMENT AVAILABLE IN ELECTRONIC OR DIGITAL FORM

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29 JAN 1982

UNCLASSIFIED

U. S. Air Force Oral History Interview

AFSHRC MAXWELL AFB AL 36118	COPY 2	RETURN TO	01/01/63 31/01/67	K239.0512-103 62/00/00 64/00/00
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K239.0512-103

Lt Col William H. Miller (USA)



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Corona Harvest #0000054

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ALBERT F. SIMPSON
HISTORICAL RESEARCH CENTER
Air University

OFFICE OF AIR FORCE HISTORY
Headquarters USAF

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00903091

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

K239.0512-103

Interview
of
Lt Col William H. Miller (USA)

By
Maj Samuel E. Riddlebarger

Date 21 Jan 69

Location _____

K239.0512-103 01/01/69 AM/07/17	RETURN TO
AFSHRC MAXWELL AFB AL 36114	

3-7124-175

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MIRACODE INDEX SHEET

TITLE: (U) INTERVIEW OF LT COL W. H. MILLER (USA) #103 (U) ^{AFEO} FOUO CALL NO. _____
ORIGIN: _____ ACC. NO. _____
DATE: _____ MAG. NO. _____
TYPE: _____ FRAME NO. _____
INDEXED BY _____ DATE: _____ NO. PAGES: _____

Descriptor	Code	Descriptor	Code
IN-COUNTRY STRIKE	290000		
HARASSMENT/FREE AREA BOMBING	290200		
LANDING ZONE PREPARATION	290300		
LESSONS LEARNED	330000		
MUNITIONS	380000		
TACTICAL AIR CONTROL (SYSTEM)	590000		
(TACS)			
DIRECT AIR SUPPORT CENTER (DASC)	590100		
ENEMY	990000		
TACTICS	990800		

ABSTRACT:

AN EXCELLENT INTERVIEW OF A U.S. ARMY LT COL WHO SERVED IN SVN IN 63, 64, 66, AND 67 PRIMARILY AS A BATTALION COMMANDER. HE PRAISES TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT AND USAF FAC'S IN PARTICULAR.

DISCUSSES FAC PROCEDURES; PROPER USE OF MIX OF HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS, ARTILLERY, TACTICAL AIR; PECULIAR NATURE OF WAR AND PROBLEMS OF GROUND COMMANDER WHO MUST SELECT PROPER TACTICS AND USE OF AIR SUPPORT; PROBLEMS OF KEEPING POSITIONS OF WIDELY SCATTERED FRIENDLY FORCES MARKED--FAC IS USEFUL IN THIS REGARD; AIR STRIKE REQUEST SYSTEM.

STATES THAT PROBLEM ARISES WHEN FAC GOES OVER TO FIGHTER FREQ BECAUSE GROUND UNIT CANNOT THEN ABORT THE STRIKE; CITES INCIDENT WHEREIN ONE OF HIS UNITS PUT IN STRIKE NOT KNOWING FRIENDLIES WERE IN AREA AND HE COULDN'T GET IT STOPPED.

PRAISES OUTSTANDING ACCURACY OF AIR STRIKES FAC DIRECTION AND MARKING. USED JOPPORTUNE STRIKES FREQUENTLY. RECEIVED NO CASUALTIES FROM TACTICAL AIR STRIKES BUT DID FROM HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS; NEVERTHELESS, GUNSHIPS ARE EXCELLENT WEAPONS AND HIGHLY EFFECTIVE. COMMENTS ON B-52 STRIKES AND SPOOKY, WHICH HE TERMS GOOD FOR BOTH ILLUMINATION AND SUPPRESSIVE PASSES.

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MIRACODE INDEX SHEET

TITLE: (U) INTERVIEW OF LT COL W. H. MILLER (USA) #103 (U) ^{AFEO} FOUO CALL NO. _____
ORIGIN: _____ ACC. NO. _____
DATE: _____ MAG. NO. _____
TYPE: _____ FRAME NO. _____
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Descriptor	Code	Descriptor	Code
RELATES INCIDENT OF GETTING SNIPER WITH 750-POUND BOMBS FROM USAF FIGHTERS; EXPLAINS AND RATIONALIZES USE OF FIGHTERS.			
CONFIDENTIAL			

Project CORONA HARVEST Oral History Interview #103
21 January 1969
UNCLASSIFIED, FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY, AIR FORCE EYES ONLY
CORONA HARVEST Control #0000054
Taped interview of Lt Colonel William H. Miller, US Army,
conducted by Major Samuel E. Riddlebarger

Riddlebarger: Would you state your rank and period of
service in Southeast Asia?

Miller: I'm Lt Colonel William H. Miller. I was
in Vietnam as an advisor during all the
calendar year of '63, part of '64. I went
back to Vietnam in July of '66 and stayed
till August '67. During that period, for
the most part, I was an infantry battalion
commander.

Riddlebarger: Alright. Would you care to comment generally
on the quality of close air support and
tactical airlift you received over there?



[REDACTED]

Any general statements you'd like to make
or incidents illustrating?

Miller: Well, for the most part for ... for close
air support, what it boiled down to was ...
I guess our procedure for getting air
strike was a little bit modified because
we usually had an airborne FAC, an Air Force
commissioned officer flying above and a
typical example: I was west of Pleiku on
the Cambodian border for the first five
weeks I had the battalion and over there
we were expecting to hit large size units,
maybe a NVA battalion or a NVA regiment.
Well, this, of course, required us to keep
our infantry companies a little bit closer
so that if one of them made heavy contact,
we could get the other there in a hurry.
Now, where the Air Force come in here, I go
back again, was mainly with that FAC. If
"A" Company of my battalion made contact,
why usually the FAC was the first guy there

[REDACTED]

and the FAC would get up over and say I can see 'em or I can't see 'em and by that time the first thing would happen would be artillery, of course, and then the FAC pilot would come up on the frequency of the actual front line infantry commander and he'd say, "I can get four jets in 12 minutes," or, "I can get four jets in 6 minutes," or, "I can get an air strike in 20 minutes," or he'd give us a ballpark figure on how long it would take and sometimes he'd say, "Wait one minute," and he'd make a call and come back and say, "Well, there's six jets headed for another place up north. I can get them diverted to you." Well, in the meantime the artillery kept going, of course. Now you can go into the gunship business. You've got to war game how long it would have taken that front line company commander to get gunships because that's something that's immediately responsive to us and if gunships could get there before

[REDACTED]

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the jets could we'd still keep artillery going, lift artillery possibly, make a run of gunships and then when the jets arrived, we'd call them off and put the jets in and when they expended their ordnance, pull them off and go back with the gunships maybe again with artillery.

Riddlebarger: As you said before, you take what you can get out there.

Miller: Yes. If I had the whole d--- world orbiting up there, alright. It depends on the contact because a lot of your contact in Vietnam is kind of not a bird in the hand but it's a bird in the bush because when you make contact with a small Viet Cong or NVA unit, you're in the jungle and visibility is anywhere from 5 feet to 25 at maximum and you really don't know. When you make a small contact and maybe a front line infantry company commander can say, "Well, there was two or three automatic rifles firing at us

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or automatic weapons." Well, the question is, should you immediately order the assault and go charge those ... and half the time you don't even see the guy who's shooting at you. So a lot of time an air strike, artillery, is an "if." If it's a large unit, I've got enough on him, and if he's building up his attack to hit me, maybe we can break up the attack. And then if our attack goes, then you've got the suppressive bombardment on it to go forward. Because you don't ... that's X to that equation of what's under that canopy, you don't ever know, because a lot of times the VC will use luring tactics where they'll suck you right in to a d--- ambush or mine field and clobber you with a big unit. So an infantry commander has to be cautious. So if you don't bombard with all resources available, he's not a very good tactician.

Riddlebarger: You were articulating before ... a little

[REDACTED]

difference here that this is a guerrilla war not a ... not a major war. Would you like to go into that again for a moment?

Miller: Well, our terms have got so confused now that ... we use to call it counterinsurgency. We called it counterguerrilla. We called it a guerrilla war; a conventional war. I don't really know. I think the terms have kind of lost. But if you meet a NVA battalion west of Pleiku, just short of the Cambodian border, and two infantry battalions slug it out, by God, that's not a guerrilla war. That's conventional as h---. I guess we kind of lose sight of what it is. But tactically the big difference is in a conventional war we have positive intelligence, we know the enemy is there, and we pulverize him with the air artillery. I call it the bombardment. H---, battleship if you've got one up there. We do everything to kill that enemy on his position so that it will make it easy for the

[REDACTED]

rifleman, ideally for the rifleman, to walk across the objective and find nothing but a dead bunch of enemy. And, of course, what the bombardment didn't get then he has to go up and stick him with a bayonet. That to me is a conventional war. Now the ... h---, I think a better name is Vietnam Oriented War, because here at the school we have a hard time finding exact terms on what to say; so most instructions I present here I call it the Vietnam Oriented ... because here we teach basically getting the officer a military education, we teach the old fundamentals ... which is centered around conventional war. Then after we've presented the conventional aspects of war, then we throw on the Vietnam Oriented Instructions. In fact, that's what we call it. Now, if you want to call that counter guerrilla, that's alright. It's not a wrong term. Whether the Harvard dictionary describes that as being it exactly, I don't know. But the

[REDACTED]

or another battalion." The element that makes the contact has to develop the situation; go ahead. He's searched, now he's found him. Now he must fight him and destroy him. Then if that's not enough, the force on the ground that makes the contact; then the next higher commander has to bring in more forces and we call it pile-on. To me that's the real big difference in Vietnam. And the sweat part is the infantry element that makes the contact. You don't know. Is it two guerrillas? Is it two snipers? Is it two battalions? Is it two regiments or what? So the command element gives ... gives ... it gives the commander ulcers because I know when one of my companies use to call up and holler, "I'm in contact." That let me know that he had a battle going on. And then maybe just a few minutes later, he'd say, "Skipper, I don't believe it's big." Says, "I only hear three or four weapons. We saw three or four. I don't

[REDACTED]

believe it's big. I believe they're trying to get away and we're taking up the pursuit." But then when a company commander called up and said, "I've got a heavy contact." Let me tell you something. For the next higher commander, the next move is his if that company making the contact can't handle it. So in the meantime then is where you turn on your air and your bombardment. And I'll take whatever is available. If he says I've got two jets that can be here in three minutes, I don't even consider gunships. I get gunships airborne cause sooner or later when he's expended his ordnance then I'm going to ... you know ...

Riddlebarger: How about your accuracy and all? Were you wary of using any of the particular munitions used by the ...

Miller: Yes. This is a very big problem. This is a very big problem because we're talking about land navigation and orientation.

[REDACTED]

Because if an infantry commander on the ground down there is within one or two kilometers of where he thinks he is, to me he's a good navigator. And this little FAC that we kept airborne up there, bless his heart, that guy ... he was better for this than anything else. I don't know how many times a day that a FAC would go over a rifle company and give them a fix. You know, give him the exact coordinates. And this is very important to the artillery observer with the rifle company because when he calls back, if the FAC has given him a fix, he can give the coordinates, 692382, and then the third round that's in there of artillery is on the target. But, usually, me as a battalion commander, when a contact would happen, I always had a Charlie-Charlie, a what we called a command and control helicopter. But usually the FAC would beat me to the area, and he'd already have the friendly situation fixed ... where they are ... and then when I got on the scene I

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could see the FAC working and sometimes it would become a three-way conversation. And immediately then at that point you decide what you want to do. A lot of times you can ... can walk along and you get one magazine; but the enemy opened up at you ... just one long brrrrrrrrrp ... and you never see the little b-----. You don't know where he went and you never have any more contact with him. "Say geez, that was strange that one lone brave hero would be out there all by himself." But you always fear where the rest of the outfit is. Now that is a true guerrilla -- One lonely little guy that will raise up and spray an infantry column and turn around and run through ... and they do this. Now, to me, that's a guerrilla.

Riddlebarger: Did you ever have any problems with you working a C&C chopper and the FAC in his Bird Dog close by?

Miller: Any problem. No. Compliment each other

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[REDACTED]

because, h---, we knew all the FACs real well. In fact, the FACs use to come down to the battalion at least once a week for a couple of hours - you might say when they were off duty - and they knew the AO there probably better than anybody. In fact, most of them had the maps memorized, you know, because I had my AO memorized. When the company commander would give me a coordinate, I had ... he'd say 692, I could just almost put my finger on it with my eyes closed. But I would say that the FAC had the AO memorized better than anybody else. He knew that this stream crossing was a certain coordinate, he knew that this trail junction was a certain coordinate, and ...

Riddlebarger: Do you think he should have been armed? You know there's a discussion over how much of what he should have in order to do what he can himself. Do you have any particular feel on that?

[REDACTED]

Miller:

I don't believe you could make ... I imagine the Air Force would want all the armament it could get on any vehicle but I I don't ... probably not qualified to comment on that. I think if a FAC was up there and one lonely weapon was shooting at him; if he had the right ordnance, he could probably dive bomb down on him and knock him out; but that's not his real mission to get up there and counter what's shooting at him. If you could put it in there as an extra bonus, I'm sure the FAC would love to have it but to comment officially whether they should or should not, I believe that's out of my H---, it's just like me in the command and control helicopter, I had two-door gunners on there but there's very seldom that I ever go down and try to take over the role of the jet. I could; but I didn't want to ... I mean ... it's not the instrument that's suppose to do that; cause when I go down and do that, then I become a gunship, and then

[REDACTED]

I've reduced myself to a gun crewman. I don't know. I guess as a bonus, it would be nice to have, but to say it's required, I'd say no.

Riddlebarger: How about your request system there? Did it function to your satisfaction, either the Army or the Air Force side, as far as getting immediates in particular?

Miller: Well, our request went to the FAC. Of course, they monitored it at brigade. So you've got a two-way communication because the FAC that was up over the area was normally on the rifle elements freq and he'd holler, "Get me some air." That's the way you went. Of course, now you know, in conventional lines like we were in Korea, we didn't go that way. I mean you could, if you had a FAC up, but normally you went through the battalion, the division to the corps, and back to, what do you call those things, you know, where the joint ...

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Riddlebarger: DASC?

Miller: Yes. Where the joint center is. But we didn't use that. But, of course, it took its same toll I believe, but, h---, the FAC was airborne and he called back and everybody monitored. In fact, it's much better now.

Riddlebarger: In other words, you think that worked pretty good that way?

Miller: H---, yes, it's par.

Riddlebarger: Did you get good response? That's all you're interested in.

Miller: Yes. That's all I cared. Now, out in the area there, we had the FAC up and I believe that the ... you see, the FAC that was suppose to be with me at the battalion level stayed at brigade and I had an Air Force sergeant that stayed with me all time with the radio. I forget what you call it; a track something. He'd get on the freq

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[REDACTED]

and a lot of time we'd sit there with nothing else to do but listen to the FAC and the pilots talking because they were on another freq. Of course, on the FAC radio, went down to the infantry commander; was a different one on the ... I don't know ... h---, I forget what's the name of that radio is, but it had the capability in the FAC to talk to the ground commander; and you got on VHF or UHF to talk to the pilot and then when the actual strike would go then the FAC was off our freq because he was talking to the pilot. Because there was a couple of times that jets had peeled off to go in that we wanted to scratch it and we had a pretty hard time because the FAC, you see, switches over to the pilot's freq, the UHF or VHF. I don't know what I'm talking about but ... I know the results. So ... so the little Air Force sergeant at the battalion fire base could monitor on that freq that they were on, because, you see, the supported element, the

[REDACTED]

down there and I saw it was four or five hundred meters from one of the friendly infantry platoons. And I hollered scratch but nobody heard me because the FAC had already switched over and the jets were peeling off. It didn't hit any of the friendlies but the lesson is there. So, thereafter, this sergeant down there - every-time they would hit - would monitor. In fact, he heard me and that sergeant did get it scratched. In fact, the lead jet had made ... had delivered his ordnance and - they were going in trail - and while that second was peeling off, that ... you see, we had the fire base concept ... like the battalion CP would be here in the midst of the jungle with the artillery battery; and A Company would be searching the enemy out here, and B Company out here, and C Company out here. And the Air Force sergeant was right here with that radio and, of course, the air strike was going on over here some

[REDACTED]

place. And the first jet had delivered the ordnance and on the command net I heard the infantry lieutenant down there scream, "Wow, that's too cotton-picking close. Cut it off! Cut it off!" And immediately I told them ... I said, "Pop a red smoke grenade real fast and I'll try to get it cut off," and this Air Force sergeant heard me here because he was standing right beside of my command net and, you see, he knew that the FAC had switched over to this ... what is it? UHF or VHF?

Riddlebarger: He switched to VHF?

Miller: Yes. So then this Air Force sergeant hollered on their freq and says, "Cut it off. It's too close."

Riddlebarger: You've got to have some sort of system to call that back even at the last minute.

Miller: Well, that ... I guess obviously that is the system but one of the touchy points there

[REDACTED]

was when he switches over, because what do you ... I think we use to call that an Arc-44, the old Army L-19 ... I don't know what it is but anyway it's the same system. So what it boiled down to: every time we had a strike we put old Sky King, we called him, our sergeant stayed with us all the time there and he stayed on it. We'd only use it just for that or in an emergency.

Riddlebarger: Do you feel the close air support strikes were accurate?

Miller: Oh yes ... yes. It just ... I could term it nothing but outstanding all the way there. The only thing you could ever say was is the time it takes. I know that you can't have jets orbiting up there on an "if" because, Good God, from the northern part of Vietnam to the southern part the Air Force is allocated centrally. I don't expect one to be orbiting up there in case my little old outfit gets into something, because I wouldn't reduce my mind to that narrow spectrum.

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Riddlebarger: Did you have success in getting preplans, say for an LZ prep, or something, when you wanted it?

Miller: Oh yes. No sweat at all.

Riddlebarger: Did they respond? You didn't have

Miller: No sweat at all.

Riddlebarger: No problem getting enough of them?

Miller: No. No. Anything that was on a preplanned basis, we had no trouble at all. When we screamed real loud is when contact was made, you see. You just don't plan stuff in Vietnam like you do in a conventional war. Really what I was doing as an infantry battalion commander was mainly reacting. In theory the whole time I had the battalion I was searching for this little b-----. And, by golly, when you find him, you want to hit him now. You can't go to the brigade commander and say, "Sir, here's my plan."

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then you've got to go through that drop 200, left 200, drop 100 til you get it on there but that's ... that's the immediate thing you have. But the h--- of it is, an airplane, there's a man in it that's got eyes and he can look down there and that's why I go back ... I go back to the FAC and I guess I was the second FAC because I always had a helicopter in and the poor b----- down there that's in contact can only see so far and it's just all the difference in the world for a guy to get up and look down vertically and he'd say, "Yes, I see six of 'em running." "Which way are they going?" "They're going to the northwest. And here goes six more that's going to the northeast." You know. It's just a human up there in the airplane that can see. Pardner, that's the difference.

Riddlebarger: Did you have any particular kind of munition you preferred?

Miller: Well

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[REDACTED]

Riddlebarger: Was there a kind of munition you didn't like, say CBU or something?

Miller: I don't know much about that CBU but we did use it some. I like the old 20 Mike Mike and the rockets, that real close support. And, h---, we put those things in by jets, G-- D---, as close as we did the artillery; because I was telling you before you turned this tape on here that I have laid flat on my belly with a jet airplane strafing at 30 meters with 20 Mike Mike and after the first run I felt confident ... maybe it was 50 meters, but I mean d--- close. And, of course, we were all down flat on our bellies and after the first one made their run I had all the confidence in the world that ... you know that first burst is what you sweat. You say, well, the FAC has gone down and marked it with his rockets and maybe he'll put two rockets. A lot of time this ... I don't know where the Air Force uses this

or not ... but one technique that our FAC had was he would put one rocket here, go 300 meters over here and put another rocket, and I would hear him call to that jet pilot and say, "Hit that on a mag heading of 180 and then go straight to this one." Because, you see, the jet pilot don't have the slightest idea where the friendlies are this to me, pardner, is critical. And then if I'm so to 40 meters and that pilot is here, now where you get in the sweat if he veers off from this first strike, he's in trouble. And we had the same thing with the gunships. Same principle there as in artillery. You don't put the ... I guess you really sweat that first burst and a lot of times he would start out up here and then work back in a little closer. And I have heard a FAC tell a pilot, "Well, go right one or two degrees." Now that's mighty d--- small. But once you get your initial run in there and say, "Buddy, you're making money." then, boy, you can

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just really turn it on because there's always smoke or something that the ... that the trail pilot hits. This for an infantryman is crucial. And you get up there sometime and it takes the FAC sometimes a little time to get the ordnance man oriented on where to put it but you just have to take that time and we ... we had more trouble with the gunships now in this than we did with the ... because the FAC was a pro on it. Because that little b----- stayed up there all the time and he knew ... he was there when the fight started and he's already ... in other words, he has it really fixed when the jets get there and this is an advantage over ... aircraft to gunships. Probably my fraternity wouldn't like me saying this, I'm not sure, but, you see, the man on the ground has to orient the gunships. And I have milled around up there, and you hear this infantry platoon leader, "They're in front of me!" Now this is getting down to technique on how you

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orient them. And I've butted in a many time. We had to come up with SOPs. You've got to say - the guy on the ground - if he's doing the orientation - has got to say, "I am standing on the yellow smoke pot. The enemy is 175 meters on an azimuth of 180 degrees from that smoke pot." But you know the infantry leader will get all excited. "They're in front of me and they're behind me." And when he says they're in front of me then you've got to say, "Well, son, which way are you facing." Doesn't that sound silly and elementary but it's a d--- problem. So we had more trouble getting gunships on target because the man on the ground has to orient the gunship pilot. But, you see, the FAC is already there and he does the orientation. Of course now, the FAC himself has to be oriented but while they're on the way up there, boy, that's what he's working on. A many a time the FAC couldn't find him, and he'd go down and say, "Well, I'm going to

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and that's hard. Then you have to convert a perimeter to a square and say, jets hit like this on this side, like this on this side, like this on this side. And you really turn around and make it a square. But when you hit, you still got your railroad tracks and that was the biggest problem we had because I can't say that we ever had any ... I had the battalion nine months and we never had any friendly casualties from Air Force. I did have it from gunships. The rockets went berserk or that

Riddlebarger: Are you talking about helicopter gunships?

Miller: Yes. Yes. No, I'm talking about helicopter gunships because ... I like them. Oh, I love those gunships, now. I'm not knocking them but that guy on the gunship is just not as professional as that guy is in that jet airplane because he's had a h--- of a lot more schooling and the accuracy is better. Now, you've got volume because once you get

gunships in there, and if the VC break and start running, boy, you can cut them down because you've got door gunners there, you've got the pilot, the co-pilot, two-door gunners. If they're break and run why ... I don't knock the gunships but I'm just saying that if I had my druthers to bring it in there at 30 meters on initial pass, I'll take the guy that's been trained thoroughly.

Riddlebarger: How many FACs ... did you have enough FACs?
I mean, were you ever hurting for

Miller: Yes. They ... See, they pooled them at brigade. Now I forget, I've been through air-ground school but, h---, I've forgotten; h---, let's just say that conventional war - the way I was trained - it was ... depend on what level you are. Starting at battalion, it goes up through division where you've got your blue suit boy that passes it on, and then corps remains silent. You know what I'm talking about. Over there the only thing

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we did was deal through the FAC. Now a lot of times I'd switch over on the other net and I'd call my commander and say, "Hey, give me a little help. I need them jets ASAP." He'd say, "Well, we're on top of it." And it went through because you had your Air Force crew at the brigade and not at the battalion. Because the commissioned Air Force personnel did not stay at battalion the way we operate. Only that sergeant with the radio. And the sergeant assisted us a lot. A lot of times I'd put him in the helicopter and send him up to the brigade and say, "I want these preplanned tonight." You know, because we normally got an SOP. They'd tell me, "You can have 68" What did we call them? We called them Skyspots, I guess. It was that ... what the h--- is it?

Riddlebarger: Radar directed? That's a Skyspot.

Miller: Yes. That's what it is. A lot of time I would send that sergeant to brigade. But my

[REDACTED]

artillery liaison officer that I had, you know, is my fire support coordinator at battalion level so they worked together and a lot of time the artillery officer and the Air Force sergeant would go back to brigade and get a hold of the S-3 air and your boy in the blue suit there and they'd plot it and say, "It's four o'clock in the afternoon now and all friendlies ... Because, see, we were scattered. God, instead of ... Normally at a battalion you'd have A, B, and C, and D Company; four different locations in a conventional war. But a lot of times at night I'd have 18 or 20 locations. All them little LRPs and all the ambushes. So you've got to get this thing on a plot and make sure we don't drop that Skyspot in there and this is the crucial part on the pre-planned. And I would get anywhere from four to six, I would say, normally each night, or request it and sometimes they'd find ... a lot of times ... Well, I'd request

all I could get. Because if you can't hit this little b-----, at least you can keep him awake all night. And then this plus your harassing and interdictory fire from the artillery kept a lot of noise going on in the battle area all night.

Riddlebarger: Do you think you had a sufficient number and a proper interface with the blue suiters?

Miller: Oh yes. We didn't have any problem at all. We didn't have any problem at all and, you see, we were a heliborne unit and, Christ, we just heliborned all the time. I know then ... See, I left the Cambodian border there. After five weeks we went over to the Bong Son Plains. You know where it is? And it was just leap frog, heliborne everywhere, and we had a mixture. Maybe, if we thought it was going to be a real hot area where we were a little bit afraid of, we'd have the Air Force assist in the prep. Then a lot of times where we prepped just to be

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a cautious commander to not let helicopters sit down in a live area, we'd put a four or five minute prep of artillery. In other words, as your heliborne started in, just five minutes away, just prep it with two or three batteries, right in the area where the actual skids of the helicopters were going to sit down. We'd just converge the sheaf and just clobber it in case there were mines, and then move out about 100 meters and clobber it in case there's enemy infantry around it. And then, just 10 seconds, when that thing would lift ... Well, in other words, if your artillery is going in like this, you bring your gunships. I mean your troops - in this way, and you could lift and in 10 seconds the first helicopter's on the ground. Now as soon as that artillery lifted, we'd normally precede the infantry in helicopters with a platoon of gunships. And it would spray and, really, a lot of times the gunships have been spraying while the infantry's sitting

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down: You have to do that because if the LZ is hot then you didn't take the necessary precaution; then you're a poor commander. Cause you want that GI to last a year not one day.

Riddlebarger: How about B-52s? You said you had some association with them.

Miller: Yes.

Riddlebarger: Did they help you?

Miller: November, December, of '66, right next to the Cambodian border over there, we hit a big NVA force and we were so d--- close to the border, stupid as it was. And really what we did was run up against their Maginot Line. And you know you had the rules of how close you could go to the border. We couldn't heliborne over in back of them. We couldn't maneuver to the south flank because the border cut it towards Pleiku there. And we hit that thing ... In fact, the enemy took

[REDACTED]

his toll on us, too. And it just seemed that artillery didn't breach them at all so we pulled back and hit B-52 strikes there, twice. And we went back and, boy, they were right in there. It shook a h--- of a lot of people up. We found a lot of dead in there. And I guess the d--- concussion from that thing ... I forget how many there were. That's the only B-52 strike that I saw where I could actually see the airplanes. It was a clear morning. The sun was just right. We saw the glitter and, of course, as they dropped the ordnance, they were heading straight towards the Cambodian border. And just as they cut loose, we, God, they turned those 52s around just like it was an old P-51 because I guess they didn't want to go across the border. Whether they went across or not, I could care less, but I don't think they did. And what they did there was ... You see, this bombardment exceeds that of artillery so there's no comparison and they

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got in on that area. Then we went back. I think tactically this might have been a little bit stupid because we're after nothing but the enemy, and I think there are about 160 to 170 that was killed in that. Now whether it was all B-52, I don't know. But when we went back in there, it had definitely got into that fortified area and it shook their a-- up.

Riddlebarger: How did you go about BDA, KBA counts after B-52 strikes? Body count?

Miller: Well, on this particular one, yes. Oh, God, there was blood all over ... It got in 'em ... It got in 'em. H---, this is on record somewhere. Because we pulled back whatever the safety limit was, and hit it, and, h---, when they said bombs away and we heard the booms then we went back in. And we had to walk back in there unfortunately because there was no LZs there. We couldn't heliborne in. We wouldn't anyway because this was a click

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and a half or two clicks from the border ...
right due west of Pleiku.

Riddlebarger: When they hit, does it cause you any problems on maneuverability, getting any kind of troop movements across it? I mean, if they string them out? Do you have any problems getting across the terrain after they have bombed it?

Miller: It knocks down trees and makes big craters there but it increases visibility. Because in some areas, after B-52s ... now I didn't do it but I saw it. Up in the battalion right north of me, I saw B-52 strikes. Actually cleared enough where they could put heliborne in there where the craters were, you know.

Riddlebarger: Didn't cause you any problems?

Miller: Oh h--- no, no. But this is really just a big bombardment, this example I gave, and it got right in on them. Now, I think

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two-thirds of the bombs that were dropped on that ... I forget how many we had ... I guess there were 10 or 12 in the flight ... and this particular one was in there. It hit the fortified area.

Miller: Am I too longwinded on this?

Riddlebarger: No, Sir. This is just what we're looking for. Just what we're looking for. How about the AC-47s?

Miller: Oh, Spooky. Oh, h---, yes. We used Spooky a lot.

Riddlebarger: Did you have any particular problems with it? Did he work good?

Miller: Well, let's see. It takes awhile to get him up there and ... I used him several times. We were split up and we had lonely little platoons out there. For example, on Bong Son. The order of battle was such as a ground commander can just "if" himself clear out of the problem. He can say, "Well, if I split

[REDACTED]

up and put a platoon over here, a large unit might clobber him." Then you can say, "If I keep all my forces together in strength then the little b----- won't hit me." So you take the balance there and I gambled and I put small units out. But usually we had some method of picking up reinforcements of helicopters to get in close to him. In other words, we didn't throw a platoon out there and say, "Now you get clobbered. There's nobody can rescue you." But when the monsoon season comes in and it gets dark, at one o'clock in the morning it's pretty hard to launch sophisticated heliborne operations. Now what we use to do was: the platoon or unit out there would get hit; and we felt that they were going to try to knock this unit off; and you need continuous illumination. That's one thing and that's where Spooky would take his toll because he could stay up so long and had so many flares, and, of course, I believe that was the mini-gun they had on

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it or the Gatling gun or whatever it was.

Riddlebarger: 7.62, I think.

Miller: Yes, and they were so accurate with that thing that they could just put a ring around a platoon out there in the perimeter. I can't say we ever used them when an outfit was really getting overrun but in that light of keeping continuous illumination and keeping suppressive fires ... how far out from the perimeter, I don't recall; 500 to 800 meters I guess. That's the way we used them. But it seemed that it did take a little time to get it because I know in Bong Son they had to come from ... Where did that come from? I did know. It was down south there someplace. And I would take about 30 minutes to get the Spooky on station, and, of course, he's got to get on the freq of the pitiful little platoon leader down there and say, "Where do you want me?" "No, you're a little too far to the south." It's really hard to get him

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in there. But his flares ... you just can't beat that because he can just drop 'em, and drop 'em, and drop 'em, and stay up there. And, you see, he can get up high enough to drop those flares and still keep the artillery going. So you didn't have to cut off the artillery. So it worked real good. I can't say we used them to any large ... but we did use them several times. Yes, we did.

Riddlebarger: It's another asset.

Miller: That's right. More so the flares than the ordnance because I remember twice, though, that he did spray all the way around a small platoon perimeter that we kind of had our pants down; and I would have liked to have put some more infantry in there that wee hours of the morning, but it was too big a gamble to try to do it; and really they weren't being over-run. But it was a precautionary measure and if you can keep the light out there all the time, why, you can see.

[REDACTED]

Riddlebarger: How about in the airlift line, Colonel, did you get airlift support?

Miller: Only one time. When I was in Bong Son I got ordered about four o'clock in the morning, and I was going on a long trip. That's when Task Force Oregon started so I pulled my battalion out of the jungle by helicopter and we went to Qui Nhon and we loaded on ... What was it? Charlie 97s, or ... What do you call them?

Riddlebarger: C-123s?

Miller: No, wasn't that. Something kind of like that old stratocruiser, the best I could remember.

Riddlebarger: 124s?

Miller: That wasn't it. I know them. Cause I've jumped those airplanes. It was a C-90 something.

Riddlebarger: Well, there's C-97s but I didn't know they were

[REDACTED]

Miller:

Well, I don't know. Maybe. H---, I thought it was. I went up by Caribou. I didn't go on the lift because I went on the advanced party. But I thought it was 97s because I'm quite familiar with the 30 and the paratroop aircraft. But I believe it was the 97s; that they picked me up at Qui Nhon and moved my whole battalion, including the artillery, up to Chieu Lai. And that was quite a bit of mobility. In fact, I think that was written up someplace because what happened: I was pulled out of the Bong Son Plains at sunrise on ... let's say 15 April '67 ... and at 11 or 12 o'clock I had my battalion way to h--- up to Chieu Lai and west in the jungle by noon ... the bulk of it. The only thing that wasn't in there was all of the artillery. Because, you know, we had a battalion combat team in which I had my battery of artillery and my engineers that make up this team. And we had moved from the Bong Son Plain; which is just north of

[REDACTED]

Qui Nhon, real close to Phu Cat Air Base, you know where that is? They picked us up down there and transported us to Chieu Lai. Then I got in choppers and went into a new jungle and that's quite a ways up and we were ... the bulk of the elements of the battalion was in there by noon. That's pretty ... that's pretty good moving.

Riddlebarger: How about on your field operations? Did you have much support from tactical airlift in that regard? PLADS, LAPES, or something like this?

Miller: No. I had none of that. I think the only thing I had any association, other than the close air-ground support, was on the one move. Now we had the Air Force milk runs that runs all over the country that our people use when they go on R&R and stuff like that but that one move by air for my battalion and the close support was all that I had association with.

[REDACTED]

Riddlebarger: Well, Colonel, that covers the points that I have written down here. Were there any other subjects you'd like to bring up, talk about?

Miller: No, except I got a sniper one day with a 750-pound bomb and there was an Army general said, "Bill, that's too d--- expensive to kill a sniper." And I said, "General, if we can't afford it, let's go home." After we got up to Chieu Lai - this move I just told you about - I went up there and we took over this area from the Marines. Not knocking the Marines, but the Marines were kind of sitting on their butt in that enclave thing around Route One. And, of course, when I got up there the order I got said "search and destroy" out in that green stuff so I threw my battalion out there in the area. And the VC had been untouched, so the first six or seven weeks up there we had some good little small battles. I mean, you know, at the

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who were
snipers that was up there. And then when we'd pull the platoon back out, that little b----- would raise up and shoot and it was as if he was saying, "Hey, you didn't find me. I'm still here." So one morning that d--- sniper on that hill hit seven GIs and I had pulverized that thing with eight inch and everything else and we just couldn't shut him up. So then, the old FAC called up and said he had two or three jets on a quickie. You know, had been somewhere else. Said, "Can you use them?" And I said, "You G-- D--- right I can use them." I said, "What's the ordnance?" He said, "All they got is 750 pound bombs." I said, "Out G-- D--- standing." So we clobbered those jets right up there. Of course, the FAC now had been working with this platoon. And here again goes in that beauty of the FAC. And I guess we had where that sniper was within a little 50 meter square, but he was down in a little well~~h~~ I guess, in a sanctuary, and had gone down

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in the hole and then cut out a little aperture and, boy, he was just safe as h---; and I don't know where he went when the infantry went up there but they couldn't find him. I guess the hole wasn't any bigger than that tape recorder cause those little guys are small, you know, about 90 pounds soaking wet. Well, anyway, we went back up after those ... I don't know what kind of jets they were; I don't know whether it was 57s or ... But, anyway, they went in there and the old FAC went down and marked and says, "By God, that little b----- is within 100 meters of where that smoke is so they clobbered it. We went back up there and we found his dead a--. 750-pound bomb! And I remember, General Lanell come up and I told him about and he said, "G-- d---, that's expensive, isn't it?" I said, "Boy, if we can't afford it, let's go home." I said, "That G-- d--- little sniper hit seven GIs and we got him with a 750-pound bomb." And you know, you can bring those little in close.

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Riddlebarger: 750s?

Miller:

Yes. There were troops ^{laying} flat on their belly within less than 200 meters of where that hit because I didn't know that, and I asked the FAC, I said, "Hey, old buddy, haven't we got the infantry too close?" He says, "No, I don't think so, Colonel." I said, "By God." I says, "Well, how close can they be?" And I'm telling you when those things went in there ... I ... you know, I don't know how far shrapnel went but the infantry was no closer than 200 meters. In fact, I don't know yet what the rule is. How close can you be to a 750-pound bomb?

Riddlebarger: I don't really think it says anywhere, Colonel.

Miller: Huh?

Riddlebarger: I don't think it really says anywhere.

Miller: Well.

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Riddlebarger: As far as usage is concerned.

Miller: Well, you're not ... I guess the book says and all of our support is that, to accomplish the objective, you should inflict the minimum amount of casualties with your own ordnance. But those people were real close. But anyway we sent that platoon up in there real fast and they found that little devil in there. And there must have been another one somewhere because we found one dead VC but we found two rifles. And they had that Russian carbine job that had that long telescopic sight on it and, boy, it was a good ... typical sniper rifle ... It was a good scope and what he was doing was sitting up there at 700 and 800 meters and he could put a bullet in a GI every time he'd pull the trigger. I don't know how you fight that kind of war. G-- d---, you can be the best tactician in the world but what do you teach a young lieutenant when you get one sniper up a hill and start shooting. Now what do you do? Well, you can smoke him. You

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can ... It's not realistic to call an air strike for one sniper, is it? You can't see him! And you can hit the hill with artillery and when the artillery lifts, a few minutes later, he'll raise up and say, "Hey, you guys, I'm still here. You didn't get me." Why, I don't know how you ... G-- d---, how do you fight?

Riddlebarger: Well, in this case, you had guys, you know, who didn't have another mission, so

Miller: Well, yes. The guy would come up and say we've got a quickie. That's what we referred to. We knew what a quickie was. We knew that the jets had been up north there someplace and, you know, it's just understood. We've got a bonus air strike if you got a profitable target. Well, I can't say I've got a whole battalion here in the open but ... you put ... I never turned one down. Not a d--- one. Anytime they ... you know, if you don't know how many times you hit this

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guy. And that goes back to the beginning. A lot of times we could go across a hill and maybe you'd find VC that had been dead three days; and, h---, those Skyspots ... those night drops on it killed them because, h---, there wasn't a bullet from the infantry in it and it wasn't artillery shrapnel in it. You'd find a guy with his whole belly blown open; I guess one of those ... I guess they use to do those with 750 pounders, I don't know. We called them Skyspots. That's that radar controlled

Riddlebarger: MSQ SAC bombing.

Miller: Yes. That's right. Somebody way back in the back hollers, "Bombs away." That always scared me a little bit. But, you know, we put them pretty close.

Riddlebarger: Even a Skyspot?

Miller: Yes. I don't know what I'm talking about; I guess maybe three clicks away. That's

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3000 meters. I don't know. Now there was ...
I heard of some - it didn't happen to me
but I heard of some - bad errors they had of
that in Vietnam. You know, where they just ...
you know, humans are humans and somebody had
miscalculated the coordinates or something
where they had to hit on friendlies. I mean
that happens. H---, we kill a lot of our
people with our own artillery but we don't
intend to. War is h---. No, I didn't have
any ... We had excellent support and the
biggest innovation to me is that continuous
FAC up there. Because I can remember, h---,
back when I was a lieutenant in Korea and,
s---, I was a platoon leader then and a
company commander and I never got into the
details of how we got an air strike, you
know. But, h---, I've been to school. I
know you go through that thing all the way
up the line and if it's approved, your
commander in certain areas remains silent.
In fact, I've been to air-ground school three

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or four times but ... And I imagine the policy, the procedure hasn't really changed. But to take a short cut to go to that FAC simplifies my problem. In other words, he does the staffing of it and I know it goes through brigade and all the way up to division depending upon what level you are. And I was a separate brigade most of the time, and we didn't go through division but I think really what he did was just open up his net and holler, "Anybody airborne around me anywhere?" And probably some pilot would answer and say, "Yeah, I'm over here." But somewhere in the line they made a decision on priority of strike. If it was a routine mission and I had a heavy contact, I'd get it. But I guess really probably the Field Force level is where the blue suit man has made the decision to divert. I mean, h---, that's half the business. That diversion. Because there's somebody airborne somewhere just about all the time. And then you look

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at your map and say, "How long will it take him to get here." If they say ... Then the FAC would come back and say, "I can get you four jets in 12 minutes. Do you want it?" I says, "D--- right." You can't beat that, because starting the gunship that's cut off and got to crank and then travel and get up there and p--- around on where the h--- are you and pop smoke and all this business; why, you can't beat 12 minutes. But I was amazed at the ... Maybe I just saw it from a little broader spectrum; particularly this napalm, and this strafing; of how d--- accurate they are. Boy, I never figured out yet how the h--- a pilot lobs that napalm with such accuracy. Looks like to me a lot of it is just old Kentucky rifle shooting. Yes! Because we have jets out here on one of our field problems that Major Lester up here supports, and they hit that d--- thing nearly every time with napalm. They come in low level and cut it loose way out here. I don't

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know how ... How do they figure that thing?
Is there a sight?

Riddlebarger: It's a ... Well, of course, the 105s and so forth have certain equipment in them to help them but an F-100, which is mostly what you had over there, and A-1E...

Miller: Yes. Yes.

Riddlebarger: I'm going this fast and he's dropped a couple of them before and he knows where he's got to punch it.

Miller: Yes, but he's going at such a terrific speed: 500, 600, 700 miles an hour and, then because that's the Knight pushing a button there ... But I use to really have a horror of napalm but, boy, you can bring that d--- stuff in close. And if you've got that parallel railroad track and any infantry is back, the deflection part we called it, then if the pilot makes an error, let him make on the elongated axis this way. If he drops it too

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soon, it still doesn't hurt your infantry. If he drops it too late, it doesn't hurt it. But, boy, if he's coming just a little bit, like one or two degrees, and that thing jumps and flies, it will come right in on the troops. Now we never had it. But if you can get this, boy, that's optimum.

Riddlebarger: You'd say overall, it was pretty active delivery?

Miller: Oh, h---, yes. That's what I'm saying. It just seems, comparing it to what I've seen before, that d--- 20 Mike Mike and the rockets ... Now what the h--- kind were those? Two point something or three point ... I don't know what they were.

Riddlebarger: 2.75?

Miller: 2.75. Well, that's the same as on a gunship, isn't it? We used those a lot, napalm and 20 Mike Mike. Now

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Riddlebarger: A lot of people comment on the accuracy and effectiveness of 20 Mike Mike.

Miller: Oh G--! You see, there's no ... It's not like artillery shrapnel flying everywhere, you know. If you can get him in there to dislodge the enemy ... But you can bring that in real close. You can. And once again the secret is that you've got somebody up over it. And when you get up over it. And when you get up over it and look down, a lot of times you can see all the way through that ... depends on what type a jungle you have. If it's not a triple canopy jungle, well, h---, you can see all the way down to the ground. What you're hoping for is to see that little devil dislodge ... start running. And if he ever breaks and starts running, he's dead!

