



## BAT 21: A Case Study

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On Easter Sunday, 2 April 1972, Lt Col Iceal "Gene" Hambleton was shot down just South of the demilitarized zone in Vietnam. Six days of massive effort to extract him with conventional air rescue forces failed. For five more days, he evaded the enemy on a course relayed to him in the disguise of golf course holes. His saga ended with a daring special forces rescue, but also with an enormous cost in men and material. These events, their cost, and the lessons learned from them are all detailed in this case study. The case study is built on official documents and publications, plus an oral history interview with Colonel Hambleton. The lessons learned range from individual preparation, to the requirement for better aircraft capabilities, and the need for better decision making processes for the combat search and rescue mission. A review of current rescue concepts is undertaken and compared to the historical context of Hambleton's incident. Observations are made that mission and capability may be mismatched at present, and that conventional search and rescue task force operations may be prohibited by future battlefield environments. A review of both the book and file made about Colonel Hambleton's story is appended, as is a transcript of the above mentioned interview.

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