

# THEY SERVED IN SILENCE

The Story of a Cryptologic Service and Sacrifice

**SSgt. Elmore I. Hall USAF**  
**Sgt. Michael L Stiglich USAF**



## Flight 43-49100, Call Sign Prong 33

For the men of the U.S. Air Force (USAF)'s 6994th Security Squadron based at Phu Cat Air Base in Vietnam, October 8, 1969 started like any other day. The summer monsoon season had not yet concluded, so the heavy wind and precipitation were not unexpected. Despite the rain, the temperature was a warm 80 degrees, and as the men of Flight 43-49100 headed for the flight line, there was no indication that the upcoming mission would be any different from the countless ones they had flown in the past.

Since arriving in Vietnam in the summer of 1966, the 6994th had sent crews up in specially outfitted EC-47s to conduct airborne radio direction finding missions to help discern the tactical locations and movements of enemy units. Since that time, the unit had done superlative work. In August, a 6994th mission over Quang Tri Province had located the largest number of North Vietnamese transmitters recorded up to that time. Efforts like these proved indispensable to US and South Vietnamese efforts to dominate the battlefield, and most importantly, saved lives.

The crews manning the planes consisted of those whose job it was to fly the aircraft and those whose purpose was to collect and transmit critical information regarding the enemy. For Flight 43-49100, call sign Prong 33, SSgt. Elmore L. Hall and Sgt. Michael L. Stiglich would be handling the cryptologic duties. Both men knew their jobs well and were dedicated to the mission at hand.

Hall was from Savannah, Georgia, and the more experienced of the two. Born on December 18, 1937, after high school, he initially served with the Georgia Air National Guard, but left reserve status in 1956 to go on active duty. He trained first as an administrative specialist, but later transferred to cryptologic work, completing his training as a Morse Systems Operator in July 1957. He went on to serve in USAF units in Japan, Germany, and Texas before heading to Vietnam to work with the Detachment 1 of the 6994th.

Stiglich was born in Roanoke, Virginia, on March 5, 1946 and raised in nearby Daleville. He graduated from Lord Botetourt High School in 1964 and spent two years at the University of Virginia before enlisting in the U.S Air Force Reserve in June of 1966. In September of that year, he left reserve status to go active duty. After initial and advanced training as a Morse



code operator, he spent the next few years assigned to the 6922 Security Wing at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. February of 1969 found him "in country," assigned to Detachment 1 of the 6994th.

Aircraft and crew were due to take off at 1440 that afternoon. As the day wore on, the weather continued to deteriorate. Despite the harsh conditions, the plane left on schedule; however, the crew was forced to return when it became clear that the weather and navigational radars were not working properly. The team returned to the base and was informed it would take an inordinate amount of time to fix the problems. Undaunted, pilot and crew took off again at 1630 only to determine that due to both the weather and continuing technical problems, the mission could not be completed. The decision was then made to return to Phu Cat.

As the aircraft was making its final approach, the crew reported that they were dealing with an electrical fire and the complete loss of the aircraft's navigational instruments. Shortly after that transmission, all contact with the plane was lost and the aircraft vanished from the radar screen. Inclement conditions hampered the initial search and rescue effort, but four days later, the weather finally cleared and the wreckage of the plane was found. The entire crew had perished in the crash.

SSgt Elmore Hall was buried at Beaufort National Cemetery in Beaufort, SC. He left behind a loving wife and five children. SGT Michael Stiglich is interred at Sherwood Memorial Park, Salem, VA. Both men were not forgotten. In honor of their service and sacrifice, the main avenue on Kelly Air Force Base in Texas was renamed Hall Boulevard, and Iraklion Air Station in Crete dedicated the Michael Stiglich Memorial Library in SGT Stiglich's honor.

