

LUNA, DONALD ALFRED

Name: Donald Alfred Luna
Rank/Branch: Lieutenant Colonel/US Air Force
Unit: 23rd Air Support Squadron
Nakhon Phanom Airfield, Thailand
Date of Birth: 17 April 1938
Home of Record: Houston, TX
Date of Loss: 01 February 1969
Country of Loss: Laos
Loss Coordinates: [163200N 1060500E \(XD155280\)](#)
[Click coordinates to view maps](#)
Status in 1973: Missing In Action
Category: 3
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: [O2A "Skymaster"](#)
Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)



REMARKS:

SYNOPSIS: The Cessna O2 Skymaster was the military version of the civilian Model 335 Skymaster. The twin-engine, twin-tailboom O2 had greater endurance and a little more speed than the more familiar O1 Bird Dog, but still remained essentially unarmed carrying only smoke rockets. Like its predecessor, the low flying, slow moving Skymaster was used primarily as a Forward Air Control (FAC) aircraft to mark targets for both attack aircraft and ground troops.

At 0502 hours on 1 February 1969, then Captain Donald A. Luna, pilot of an O2A, call sign "Nail 33," departed Ubon Airfield, Thailand on a Forward Air Control (FAC) combat mission over the target area known as "VR Sector 7," Savannakhet Province, Laos. VR Sector 7 was also known as "Commando Hunt." His mission flight path was from Ubon to the Commando Hunt area and return to Ubon.

The weather conditions during his mission were widely scattered rain showers with the lower cloud layer bases at 4,000 feet and the second cloud layer with bases at 7,000 feet. Visibility was 6 miles plus with surface winds southwesterly at 6 knots.

The last radio contact with Capt. Luna was at 0653 hours as he flew over the densely forested mountains 15 miles southwest of Tchepone, Laos which were known to be under complete enemy control. At that time he reported situation normal with no indication of difficulties.

His next radio contact was scheduled for approximately 0800 hours. That contact was never made. An extensive visual and electronic search was immediately initiated along a line from Ubon to and in the target area, and in the adjacent area on either side of the intended route. This search effort was terminated at dusk the same day when no trace of Capt. Luna or his aircraft was found. Donald Luna was immediately listed Missing in Action.

Donald Luna is among nearly 600 Americans who disappeared in Laos. Many of these men were known to be alive on the ground. The Laotians admitted holding "tens of tens" of American Prisoners of War, but these men were never negotiated for either by direct negotiation between our countries or through the Paris Peace Accords which ended the War in Vietnam since Laos was not a party to that agreement.

Since the end of the Vietnam War well over 21,000 reports of American prisoners, missing and otherwise unaccounted for have been received by our government. Many of these reports document LIVE American Prisoners of War remaining captive throughout Southeast Asia TODAY.

Pilots in Vietnam and Laos were called upon to fly in many dangerous circumstances, and each was prepared to be wounded, killed or captured. It probably never occurred to them that they could be abandoned by the country so proudly served.