

**Details: Kat Man Du**

**While I was waiting for transportation to Bangkok, Thailand, I visited with a MAC transport pilot on the parking ramp at Nakhom Phanom. We were both waiting for a KLONG air-taxi (C-130) to arrive for a period of combat leave in Bangkok. When he learned I was a Forward Air Controller he asked me what my most harrowing mission might have been? I deferred. "You tell me yours while I choose one. He replied "OK."**

**BACKGROUND:**

"I was flying a cargo mission from Dong Muong to Kat Man Du, Nepal. After off-loading our cargo, the load master began to upload the airplane with retrograde cargo. I checked the weight and balance calculations and determined that the cargo was within our weight and Center of Gravity for the short runway ahead. I also made sure the fuel load was adequate for a safe return to Thailand. Everything appeared to be in order until we started our take-off roll, and I noticed our acceleration was not what I expected, but there was a slight rise in the runway that could account for a slower acceleration. With some trepidation I approached our Go/No Go and realized we had no choice but to continue the takeoff since there was insufficient runway remaining to abort the flight safely. So, we staggered into the air, flying low between the mountains surrounding us, and praying for sufficient air speed to climb out of our predicament. Our aircraft performance was barely enough to climb, let alone escape the surrounding mountains, some of which exceeded 14,000 ft. MSL."

"I was unsuccessful in contacting Radio India to notify them of our departure from Kat Man Du. I also needed to advise someone that we would be deviating from our original flight plan, at least until we could reach our Minimum Crossing Altitude (MCA) and advise someone that we had no alternative to deviating from airways along our planned route of flight.

Recognizing our challenges, I ordered the Engineer to dump as much fuel as possible, to still make Bangkok, and we started preparations to jettison our cargo somewhere over the Himalayan piedmont. We were using every possible means to overcome our circumstances, from dropping 5% flaps to maintaining a positive deck angle, struggling for every inch of altitude we could get. Our gross weight lessened as we burned fuel too, allowing us to inch our way toward a pass we hoped would help us escape our confines. It did. But with little air between ourselves and the dirt above us. Once clear of the granite clouds our Navigator put us on course toward our destination where we managed to land without further incident. " Whew! (Don't try this at home).

The crew went back to the forms, only to find that the load had been weighed in *kilograms* but recorded in *pounds*! The airplane was more than twice as heavy as represented (0.45 kg equal one pound). They cheated death with skill, cunning and luck. **Don't ever ignore the DETAILS.**

**Oh, and yes, I won the scary flight discussion. But then that's another story!**

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