

Nevada man recalls helping plan Vietnam POW rescue

By Keith Rogers, Reno Gazette-Journal

LAS VEGAS – When John Gargus helped plan the historic but unsuccessful raid to rescue U.S. prisoners of war from the infamous Son Tay compound in North Vietnam, radar-evading warplanes and stealth helicopters weren't among his options.

Forty-one years ago, aircraft that delivered Special Forces soldiers to reach their target deep behind enemy lines had to fly below the radar.

Equipment such as infrared imagery and night-vision goggles were only fledgling technologies. The first forward-looking infrared instruments were used on escort planes in the Son Tay raid.

“We had six night-vision goggles. We borrowed those from Fort Belvoir (Virginia), where they were under development. It was a top-secret project,” said Gargus, a retired Air Force colonel who lives in Henderson and wrote a book about the Son Tay raid.

Gargus, 76, said he was amazed by the preparations that were made and technology that was used in the raid by Navy SEALs to kill al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden in the early morning hours of May 2 at his walled compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

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