

**UDT**

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**Apollo 11 Recovery  
Operation**

**Clancy Hatleberg**

- > OIC of recovery teams
- > decontamination swimmer



NASA was worried about Moon germs causing a plague on Earth.

They decided to quarantine the astronauts, spacecraft and lunar samples for 21 days.

To get them safely from the floating spacecraft to the mobile quarantine facility onboard *Hornet* they created the Biological Isolation Garment (aka the BIG suit).

UDT swimmers egress their helicopter  
with a flotation collar package.



During the Apollo 10 recovery the UDT decon swimmer trained with the *Apollo 11* astronauts in the Gulf of Mexico.



The rest of the Coronado-based recovery team practiced in San Diego harbor after the recovery.



There were 26 SIMEXs performed while *Hornet* waited for *Apollo 11* to return from the Moon.



Using a boilerplate capsule from NASA, swimmers practiced all facets of the recovery process.

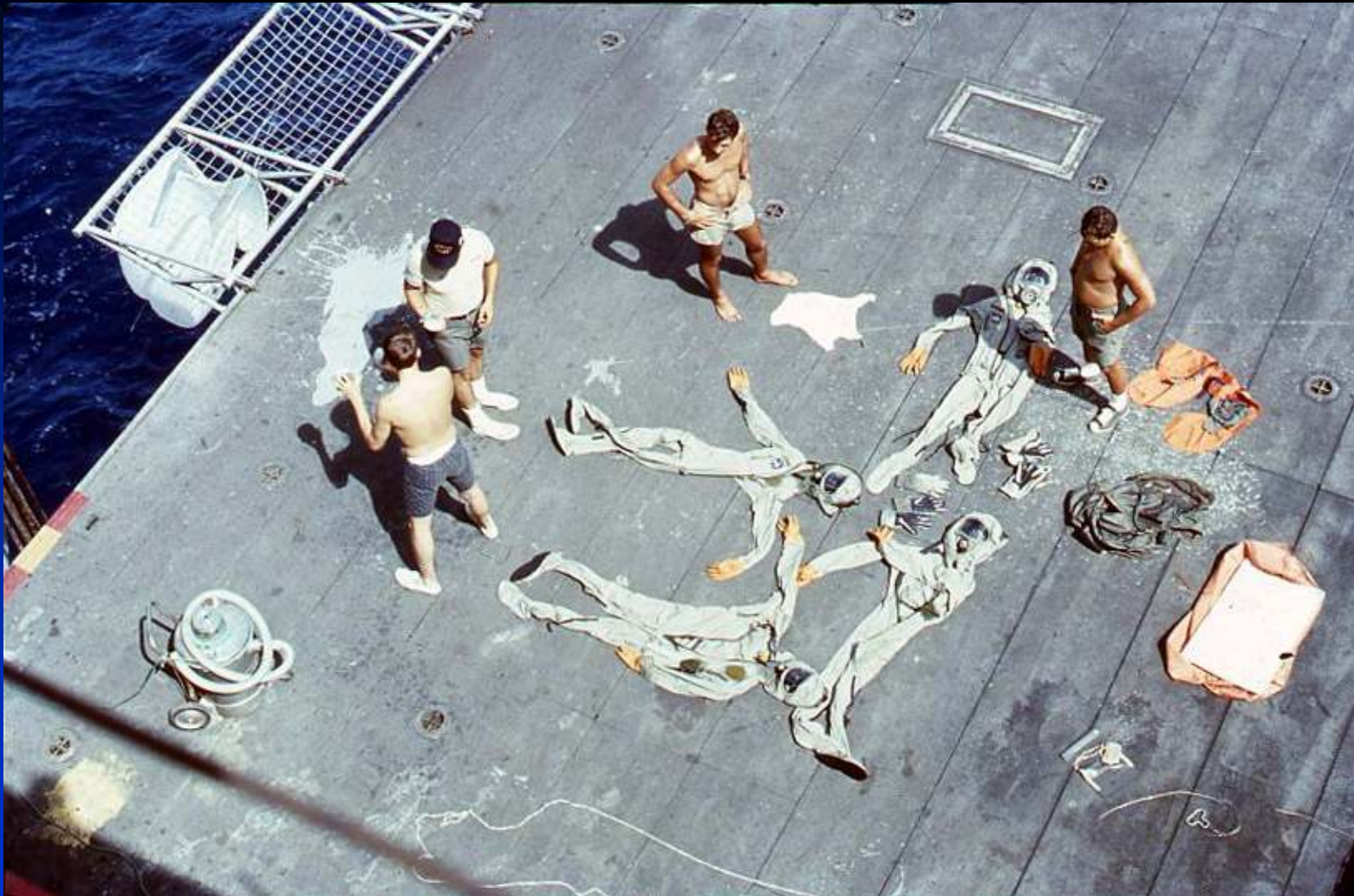




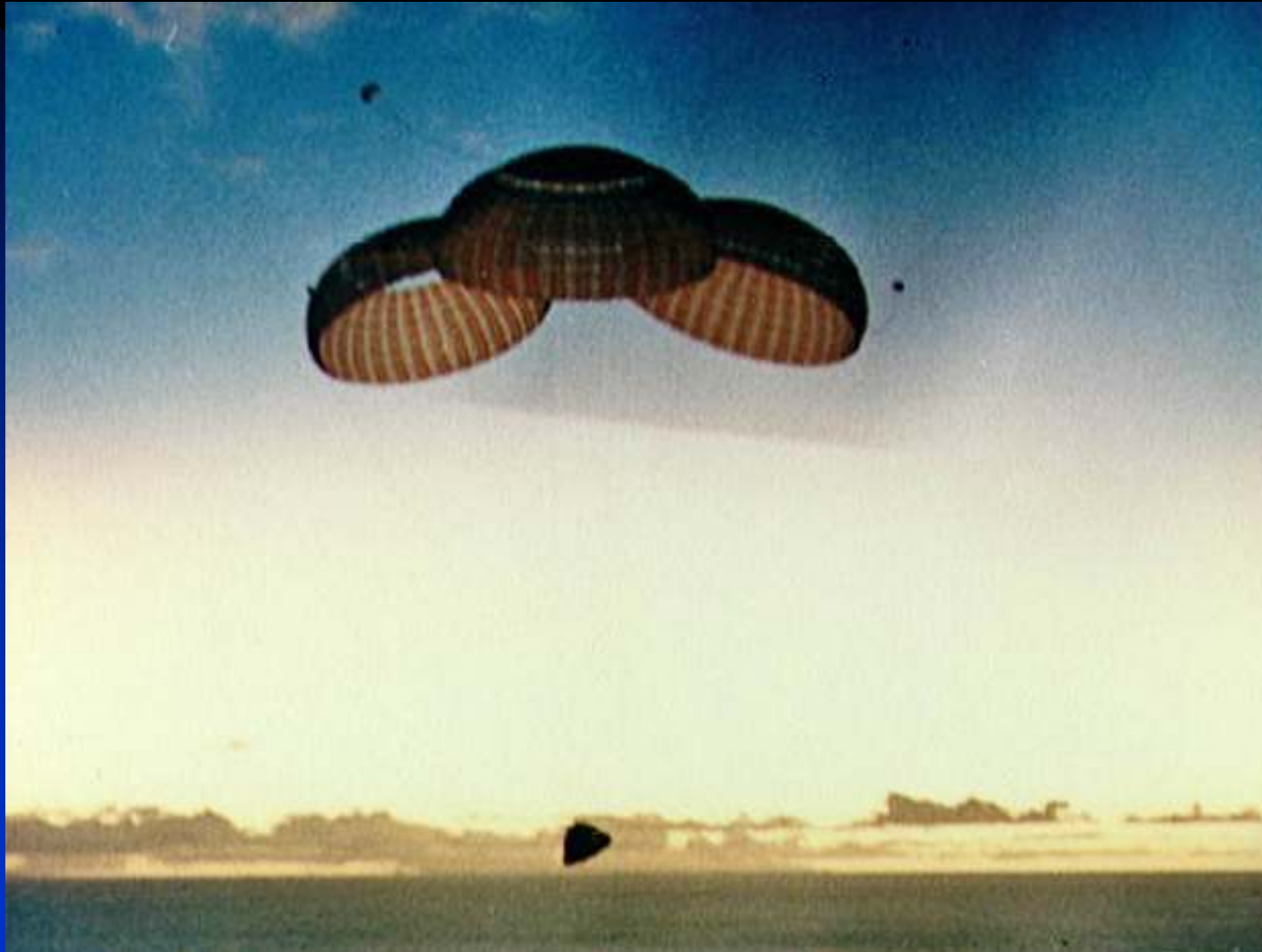
During a SIMEX, UDT personnel not only performed their normal recovery functions but also “role played” as the Apollo astronauts to make the activity more realistic.



After a SIMEX, we had to clean and dry all the recovery equipment, including these BIG suits.



This is what *Columbia* would have looked like during descent, had July 24 not been a very cloudy morning.





LTjg John McLachlan, the Leader of Swim Team One, took the only known good photos of *Columbia* before it splashed down.

This one appeared in the December 1969 edition of National Geographic as part of an article detailing the flight and recovery of *Apollo 11*.

Swim Team One hovered protectively while the spacecraft was in stable II (upside down) position.



Once the CM stabilization swimmers completed their tasks, the decon swimmer was dropped into the water.



After the astronauts had donned their BIG suits, the CM hatch was opened and they egressed into the decon raft.



NASA's procedures required the decon swimmer to first decontaminate areas of the CM with betadine.



The astronaut quarantine procedure required sodium hypochlorite to decontaminate them.

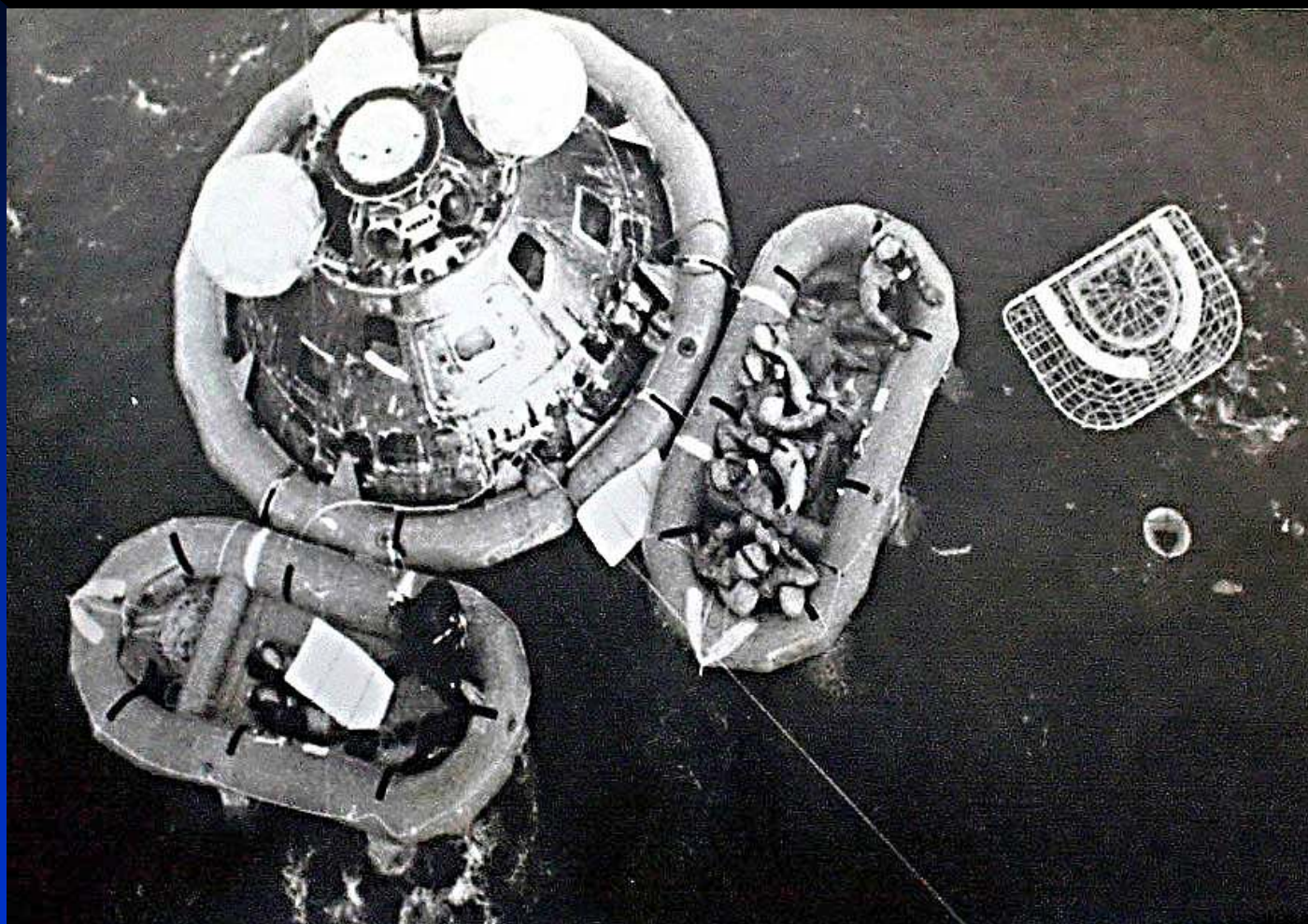




Following decontamination, the astronauts were lifted up to the recovery helicopter one at a time by Billy Pugh net.



This photo was taken from the recovery helicopter, looking straight down as the Billy Pugh net is being lowered.



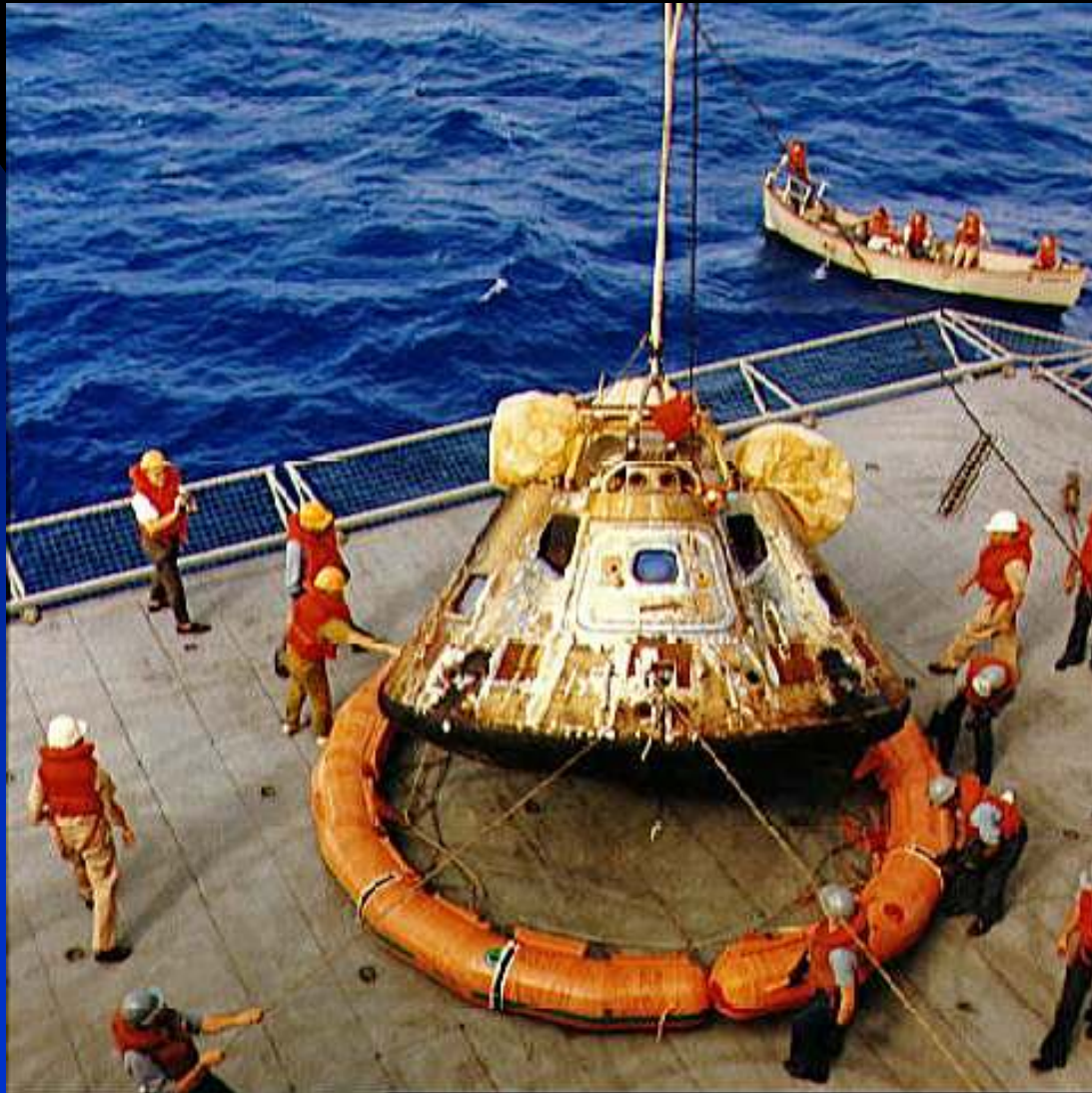
After President Nixon left, *Hornet* then approached the CM and prepared to lift it aboard by B&A crane.



Just before the CM was hoisted, the 4 UDT swimmers rafted to the side of the ship to climb up a rope ladder.



The first thing the ship's retrieval crew did was remove the flotation collar from the CM.



*Columbia* was connected to the MQF by a plastic bio-isolation tunnel to unload the moon rocks.



The *Apollo 11* recovery team consisted of members from UDT-11 and UDT-12.

Michael  
Bennett

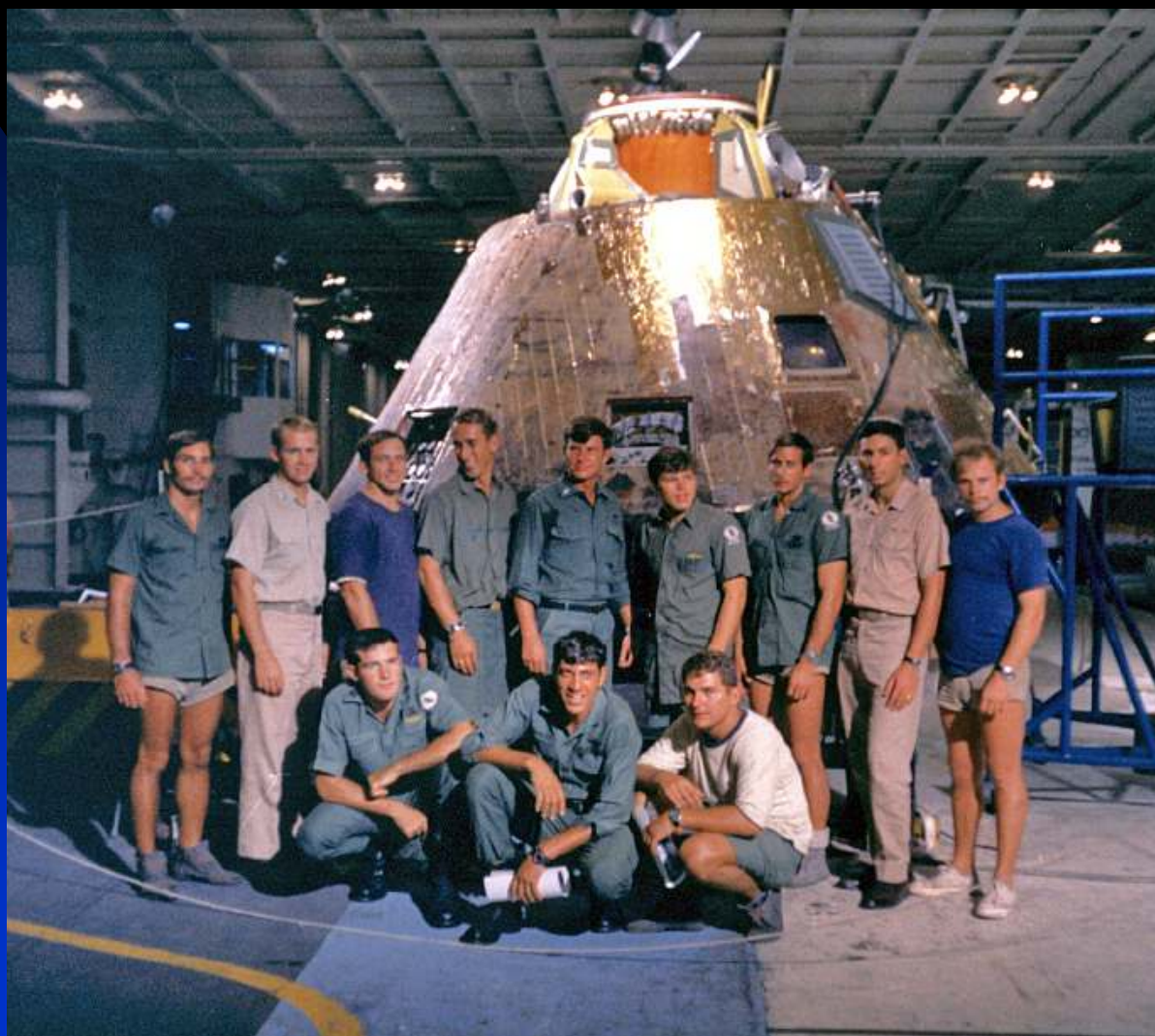
Mitchell  
Bucklew

Wes  
Chesser

Charlie  
Free

Clancy  
Hatleberg

Tom  
Holmes



Michael  
Mallory

John  
McLachlan

Terry  
Muehlenbach

Robert  
Rohrback

Joe  
Via

John  
Wolfram

## More information on this subject.....



< Overview of UDT Support to NASA  
*Splashdown: NASA and the Navy* by Don Blair

Indepth look at the *Apollo 11* recovery  
*Hornet Plus Three* by Bob Fish >

