

Reliance on external resources for aircraft support: created problems for the rescue detachment. Despite good intentions, Army and Marine helicopters were neither trained nor equipped to conduct combat rescue operations. An example of the difficulties encountered by the early rescue forces occurred on March 9, 1963. An Army OV-1 reconnaissance airplane crashed near the top of a

6,000 foot mountain in the central highlands. Two Marine H-34D helicopters were dispatched to insert a four-man rescue team at the crash site. One of the helicopters attempted to lower a member of the rescue party down to the ground on a cable. However, the cable was not long enough to penetrate the tall jungle canopy. When the helicopter tried to hover lower, it lost power and crashed. The Vietnamese ranger who was on the cable at the time was killed, but the aircrew managed to escape the wreckage before it exploded. The co-pilot, however, later died from the severe burns he had received.

The following morning, another rescue attempt was made. A second Marine helicopter crashed while trying to put the rescue team on the ground. Two of the crew were injured, but this time no one was killed. Eventually, the bodies of the OV-1 pilot, the Vietnamese ranger, and the Marine co-pilot were recovered. The rescue attempt cost two lives and caused two aircraft to be lost. It was clear that a specialized rescue force was required to more effectively operate over the dense jungles and rugged mountain terrain of Southeast Asia.<sup>22</sup>

On March 9, 1963, an Army OV-1 "Mohawk" twin-engine reconnaissance aircraft crashed near the top of a 6,000-foot mountain in the central highlands. Two Marine H-34D helicopters attempted to land a four-man American-Vietnamese rescue team at the crash site. One of the helicopters hovered over the tall jungle canopy while a Vietnamese airman was lowered on a cable. The short cable forced the helicopter to hover close to the tree tops. Suddenly it stalled and fell through the trees, killing the dangling Vietnamese. The crewmembers crawled from the burning craft before it exploded; however, the severely burned copilot died during the night. The next morning, a second Marine helicopter, attempting the same pickup, met with the fate of its predecessor. This time two crewmen were injured, but no one was killed.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, two men died and two others were injured during the rescue attempt.