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p. (U) On 26 July 1965, a UH-1H was downed in North Vietnam. In HC-54 and two HH-43 helicopters were dispatched to the incident site. The search was hampered by fog and low clouds which caused the rescue aircraft to fly at extremely low altitudes in attempting to locate the survivor. In doing this the search crews subjected themselves to heavy ground fire. An emergency beacon was received and shortly thereafter the downed pilot was located in an extremely precarious position. He was hiding on the side of a hill, completely surrounded by unfriendly forces that were searching for him. The fighters were directed to strike around the survivor to prevent his capture prior to the arrival of the helicopters. At this time a brush fire was sighted burning towards the survivors position. The helicopters arrived at the incident area and pinpointed the survivors position by the smoke from the brush fire. As the pilot was on the side of a steep hill the helicopter pilot had to maneuver the aircraft so as to have the rotor blades almost touching the side of the hill in order to hover over the survivor. This perilous operation was compounded by the low visibility caused by smoke from the fire. The survivor was saved from certain capture, or possible death from fire and returned to his home unit.

q. (U) On 27 July 1965, a strider was made against suspected surface to air missile (SAM) sites in close proximity to Hanoi. This was probably the most heavily defended area in RVN. Four F-105 aircraft were downed by anti-aircraft fire during the raid. Of the four, no parachutes were observed but contact could only be established with one of the pilots following the bailout. Upon receipt of the bailout report the HC-54 on precautionary orbit relayed the information to the Joint Search and Rescue Center which in turn launched a CH-53 helicopter to proceed to the bailout scene from a forward operating base. The CH-53 helicopter, completely unarmed and unarmored, not possessing self-sealing fuel tanks, or other combat modifications carried the very same pilot in which the four aircraft had just been shot down. The helicopter rendezvoused with fighter aircraft that had visual sightings on the survivor, and was vectored over his position. The helicopter lowered the hoist cable, and the survivor put in the harness; however, when an attempt was made to raise the survivor the hoist malfunctioned. Three of the crewmembers attempted to pull the survivor in manually, but could not accomplish this. Realizing they provided the only means of escape for the pilot, the helicopter crew elected to proceed to an open field one mile from the incident site and land. The helicopter climbed to an altitude which would permit the survivor, who was dangling 50 feet below them, to clear ground obstructions. However, when the helicopter reached the field they came under ground fire. In order of safety, the crew elected to land as the survivor could not be expected to hold on to the harness much longer. In the process of landing and retrieving the survivor the helicopter received three hits, one of which was within 6 inches of the fuel tanks. This landing took place in an open area, adjacent to a village, only 40 miles from Hanoi.

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