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3d ARRGp Hist, Oct-Dec 66

Det 6-38-131-31 Oct

(U) Two HH-43Fs were scrambled to recover survivors of a C-123 crash NW of Bien Hoa. Three crewmen were recovered using the hoist/forest penetrator and flown to Tan Son Nhut AB. No hostile action encountered and no battle damage sustained by the helicopters during the mission.

Det 1-38-9-31 Oct (RCC Narrative)

(U) At 0202Z the 35TPW TUOC telephoned me with a medical evacuation request. A unit of Army engineers were involved in a fire fight 5 miles from Phan Rang Air Base. One soldier was reported to have stepped on a land mine and was in danger of bleeding to death. They had requested helicopter evacuation. The Deputy Commander for Operations cleared us to go; we topped off the fuel tanks and scrambled at 0212Z. Just before we took off an unidentified Army captain drove up in a jeep. He confirmed that the pinned down unit had no radio or smoke, and he added the information that the wounded soldier's leg had been almost blown off. He also informed us that "Rascal 21", a FAC was orbiting the area. I asked the captain to give the FAC our UHF frequency and took off. Shortly after take off, I heard Pedro 92 check in on tower frequency from a base support mission. I requested them to fly cover for us. When we arrived in the area Rascal 21 called us but was unable to add much information. He was in intermittent radio contact with the ground party, but the reception was so weak and spotty he hadn't learned much. I could see several stalled vehicles on a dirt road located near the base of a large rocky hill. Rascal 21 pointed out the area of the supposedly secure landing site, however the sight of personnel on the ground crouched behind their vehicles and firing up at the mountain made me doubt the security of the site. I made two passes at an altitude of 200-300 ft and could see 2 individuals waving me toward a small landing spot behind a large crane pulled up along the road. I also noticed 2 men carrying the wounded man toward the landing area dodging from vehicle to vehicle. On the third pass, I intended to land but the copilot and the crew chief saw ground fire hitting the water directly below the helicopter. I took the helicopter around once more and requested Rascal 21 to ask the ground party to try to evacuate the wounded man by jeep. He seemed to have difficulty getting the message through to the ground party, but he informed me that the ground party was unable to evacuate him and intended to cover my next pass with maximum return fire. I had considerable difficulty on my approach because of turbulence and a gusty cross wind of 27 knots, at 0217Z Pedro 92 flew low over the hill while we landed 100 ft from the road, partially protected by a 3 ft earth bank and the crane. We were probably on the ground 30 seconds. The hoist operator jumped out and helped load the wounded man. An Army Lt ran up and shouted a message in my ear, (which was obscured by the din of popping M-16s and the helicopter) then we took off. We returned the survivor to Phan Rang AB dispensary.

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