

AEROSPACE RESCUE and RECOVERY SERVICE

NEWSLETTER



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OFFICE OF INFORMATION

RESCUEMEN KEPT ON THE GO. ARRS crews in Vietnam know of two type days -- busy and busier. One occasionally comes along, however, that makes all others appear serene, and such a day was experienced recently by an HH-43 crew of Det 1, 38th ARRSq, at Phan Rang AB. Captain Leonard D. Fialko and his Huskie crew were on an early morning training flight when word was received that a fighter aircraft was inbound carrying a bomb that had failed to release. The captain hastily returned to the alert pad, picked up an FSK and orbited his helicopter near the runway. Minutes later the fighter landed safely.

This emergency was hardly over when crew members spotted a gasoline fire near an Army communications tent. The chopper helped control the blaze with rotor downwash while a ground crew applied sand. The tent was saved and the helicopter crew continued their training mission. But again practice was cut short. An Army helicopter had made an emergency landing in an insecure area 10 miles from the base, so Captain Fialko headed for the spot, located the downed aircraft, recovered two pilots and returned them to base.

The crash phone interrupted the crew's few minutes on the ground. Another aircraft was coming in with a weapon that had failed to drop. As the crew scrambled to get into position they picked up a distress signal from a two-man F-4C crew ejecting a short distance from Phan Rang. Spotting the F-4C crash, Captain Fialko turned his chopper in that direction. Learning that the two had jumped from the burning aircraft, he landed long enough to let off a fireman and to get rid of his FSK, lightening the helicopter's load. The crew then proceeded at full speed to the crash site, spurred by a message from one of the downed crew members that he could hear crashing sounds around him and bullets whizzing through the trees. During the pickup of one of the downed jet pilots, the Rescue crew discovered that the crashing sounds were caused by a nearby herd of cattle and the bullet-like sounds were pieces of metal from the burning aircraft.

Delivering the recovered pilot to Phan Rang, the Rescuemen returned to search for the other F-4C crewman. He had been killed, however, and was later found by a ground party. Applying the old adage, "the busier the day, the faster it goes," Rescuemen at Phan Rang look forward to an awfully short year.