

SEVENTH AIR FORCE NEWS

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FAC Rescued 3 Days After Being Downed

DA NANG—A three-day rescue operation ended March 2 when an Air Force HH-3E "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter from Detachment 2, 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, picked up a downed forward air controller just south of the demilitarized zone.

Air Force Capt. Robert C. Mays of Weslaco, Tex., a FAC with the 30th Tactical Air Support Squadron at Da Nang AB, crash-landed his O-1E Bird Dog spotter plane Feb. 28 after receiving ground fire while on a visual reconnaissance mission near the DMZ. He was uninjured.

Immediately after receiving the distress call from Captain Mays, the 3rd ARR Coordination Center at Da Nang scrambled a chopper crew to attempt the rescue.

Captain Mays climbed a steep hillside which was shielded with cloud cover. He reported a .50 caliber gun position in the area and indicated it may endanger the rescue effort.

Although the rescue helicopter made voice contact with the downed flyer, poor weather conditions prevented the pickup.

The rescue attempt resumed the second day, but again poor weather conditions prevented success. Constant radio contact was maintained with the FAC throughout the day. At the end of the second day, the radio signal from Captain Mays was getting weak and he was advised to use his radio only when a helicopter could be heard overhead.

On the final day of the rescue mission, Capt. Robert E. Prince, Camden, Ark., helicopter commander, reported "we surveyed the area early in the morning and determined the ceiling was too low for a pickup. We then proceeded to our for-

man," Captain Prince continued.

The rescue crew relayed word to the FAC to contact the downed pilot with instructions to fire a flare to pinpoint his position.

"We circled over the same area and after some time were able to pick up his flare's smoke trail," Captain Prince said.

Capt. John W. Perry, Piedmont, Calif., the helicopter pilot, spotted the FAC standing in a clearing waving both hands. "We circled back and hovered over the area while the flight mechanic lowered the pickup cable," Captain Perry added.

"It seemed like it took forever for the cable to reach the ground," said TSgt. Maurice F. Tasker, Belmont, N.H., flight mechanic. "We had to lower about 200 feet of cable because of the dense tree cover in the area," Sergeant Tasker remarked. The helicopter was receiving enemy ground fire during the rescue pickup.

"As soon as the cable hit the ground the pilot climbed aboard and we began hauling him up. He kept looking up and smiling," the sergeant said.

As soon as Captain Mays was brought into the chopper he was checked for possible injury by pararescueman A2C Duane D. Hackney, Flint Mich. "He was in excellent condition," said Airman Hackney. "The first thing he asked for was a cigarette."

Col. Albert P. Lovelady, Alexandria, Va., 3rd ARRG commander, said of the rescue, "For more than 48 hours, mission controllers, aircrews and maintenance crews worked around-the-clock to insure that Captain Mays would have every possible

Hiding Pilot Rescued in North

S&S Vietnam Bureau

DA NANG, Vietnam—An American pilot who had been hiding on the ground in north Vietnam for more than 2 days was picked up Thursday by an Air Force helicopter rescue team.

The pilot evaded the communists for 49 hours before he was rescued by a Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew. Identity of the pilot was not disclosed.

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