

MISSION NARRATIVE: Det 10, 38th ARRSq Mission 10-18-43, 1 October 1967

Det 10, 38th ARRSq was notified at 1259Z by Binh Thuy AB Tower on primary crash circuit of a possible aircraft distress call on Paddy Control (Area GCI) frequency. Alert crew was on secondary status at this time (2059L) in the contonement area. Arriving at the alert facility at 1305Z, confirmation was received from tower of a downed aircraft, type unknown, approximately 5 NM south of Can Tho Airfield. Although weather at Binh Thuy AB was reported as 1500 scattered and 7 NM visibility, impending rain showers and lowering conditions made immediate response necessary. LBR mission fuel load of 780 pounds was considered sufficient due to closeness of the incident, approximately 10 NM from Binh Thuy AB. Pedro 39 was airborne at 1310Z and changed immediately to Paddy Control frequency for further mission information and course vectoring due to marginal 400 foot broken to overcast conditions encountered on climb out. Paddy advised that they had received a radio transmission on their operating frequency to the effect that the two-man crew of a U.S. Army OV-1, Delta Hawk 32, had ejected soon after departure from Can Tho Airfield. Pedro 39 requested immediate flareship and gunship support thru Paddy and shortly thereafter made contact with AC-47, Spooky 54, and requested flare drops in the area of reported ejection 4.5 miles south of Can Tho Airfield. After receipt of information from Paddy that a voice transmission had been received from one survivor, Pedro 39 used ARA-25 Homer to obtain an initial bearing. Weather conditions at this time were deteriorating rapidly with overcast conditions at 400 feet and visibility intermittently reduced to 1/2 to one mile in heavy rain. Pedro 39 advised Spooky 54 that entry into the search area was impossible under the circumstances and that Pedro would maintain a holding orbit over the city of Can Tho until conditions improved. Spooky 54 continued to drop flares on 270 degree magnetic heading runs across the area in an attempt to obtain a TACAN reference of the survivor's position from his sightings of the flares as they dropped thru the low overcast. Upon receipt of improving conditions in the search area, relayed by Spooky 54, Pedro entered the area and requested activation of the survivor's emergency beacon. Although activated immediately, no bearing was obtained despite several attempts and ARA-25 equipment aboard Pedro was considered inoperative, possibly due to heavy rain conditions effecting sensing equipment. As weather conditions improved, Spooky 54 was replaced by Spooky 51 and 800 foot broken conditions permitted occasional sighting of the flareship by both Pedro and the survivor. By voice instructions on guard channel and thru confirmation by the survivor of turning directions of Spooky 54, the flareship was able to more accurately pin point the survivor's immediate location. Pedro 39 entered the revised flare area at approximately 1335Z and advised the survivor to provide visual vectoring at first sighting. This was successful and although communications were lost for a short period it indicated he was close to a tree line on the west side of an extensive clear paddy area approximately 1/4 mile from a small river. Gunship helicopters requested by Pedro arrived on scene and set up a protective low orbit around Pedro who then turned to make an approach to attempt to firmly locate the survivor. A trip flare, ignited along the bank of the river, was later determined to be 350 yards west of the survivor. Contact was again made with the survivor and he advised Pedro to alter approach path 15 degrees to the left and that he was 200 yards in front of the aircraft. With final descent

initiated, floodlights were turned on momentarily and an individual was sighted running across a relatively dry paddy toward the helicopter from the tree line. The approach terminated with a floodlit landing at 1346Z as the survivor approached the cabin door and was bodily lifted headlong into the cabin by the flight engineer and pararescuer. An immediate low altitude turning takeoff was executed to avoid the tree line area where the trip flare had been sighted and climb out was continued to 700 feet MSL, just below the clouds. Approximately 3/4 of a mile from the pick-up position, Pedro was fired on by what appeared to be light automatic weapons and a hard left turn was initiated to clear the area. Although three distinct bursts were fired, all tracers passed either ahead of or behind the aircraft. After determining that no further information had been received on the other crew member's possible location, Pedro 39 proceeded to Can Tho Airfield for fuel and to release the survivor, although uninjured, to waiting medical authorities. Sea Wolf and Lancer helicopters continued to search under parachute flares for the other crew member and the downed aircraft. While awaiting fuel, Pedro 39 was visually inspected for possible battle damage and the loss of fabric covering from a right-hand blade flap and serious delamination of the plywood skin was noted. A minor deterioration of one of the two left-hand flaps was also discovered. Paddy Control was immediately advised of Pedro's grounded status and the Rescue Crew Commander proceeded to that facility to direct further search efforts thru Spooky 51. A creeping line search was established utilizing the flareship and the four remaining helicopters. It covered an area three miles square, centered 1/2 mile west of the point of the first recovery. Selected area was based upon aircraft heading before the ejection, strong westerly winds and the fact that the observer ejected approximately four seconds prior to the pilot. At 1605Z, before this search was completed, information was received at Paddy that the observer had been recovered by South-Vietnamese Popular Forces and was being brought to Can Tho Airfield by Knight 193, U.S. Army HU-1D helicopter. Search for the aircraft was continued, but was terminated shortly thereafter due to again lowering weather conditions and in view of the fact that both survivors had been rescued. Coordination of all participating aircraft was good. Flareship support was excellent and a key factor in mission success. No emergency beacon signals were reported received from the observer. Damage to Pedro control flap assemblies was concluded to have been caused by heavy rain despite reduction of helicopter speed to below 50 knots. Fabric loss probably accounted for vibration in cyclic control stick and corresponding effect in helicopter control noted during a turn immediately prior to pick-up. Det 10, 38th ARRSq direction of search terminated at Can Tho Airfield at 1405Z with RON due to grounding condition. One combat save made. Moderate to heavy ground fire conditions were encountered.

Crew of Pedro 39: (All assigned to Det 10, 38th ARRSq)

RCC - Major Harold Pickering
RCCP - 1st Lt Granville B Goza III
FE - A1C Bernard L Touchette
RS - A2C Ronald K Sholes


HAROLD PICKERING, Major, USAF
Commander