

CHAPTER III

7

OPERATIONS

MISSIONS

During the period 1 April through 30 June, Detachment One flew 123 Local Base Rescue missions, 10 air-crew recovery sorties, 14 medical evacuations, and 121 base support missions. These flights resulted in nine non-combat saves and four combat saves, and provided 23 persons with vital medical care at the 12th USAF Hospital at Cam Ranh Bay. During this reporting period, Phan Rang AB lost three aircraft, and Detachment One was first on the scene in each case. On 23 April an F-100 on GCA final crashed into a mountainous area seven miles south of the base, and both helicopters of this detachment were on the scene in a matter of minutes. The wreckage was located and a medical technician lowered on the hoist through high jungle canopy to the steep slope where the pilot lay. Unfortunately the pilot did not survive the crash. The unit was, however complimented by the Wing Commander on it's rapid reaction to the crash and quick location of the wreckage site. On 23 April an O-2 of the FAC school located at Phan Rang AB lost power on downwind and crashed within the base confines. Once again, Pedro was the first to arrive at the crash scene, and this time, fortunately, the pilot and co-pilot were able to extricate themselves from the aircraft. One, with lacerations of the head and face, was given first aid as the pair was flown across the base to the waiting ambulance.

On the evening of 23 April, an F-100 on takeoff from Phan Rang AB burst into flames as the aircraft was some eleven miles west of the base.

The pilot successfully bailed out and landed in a jungle valley. When the Pedro aircraft of this detachment arrived, there were already several "Hueys" in the area, but they were unable to recover the pilot, for lack of hoist capability. Just as the lead Pedro was being directed in to the pilot, it lost all radios, and was unable to locate his exact position. The "high bird" quickly evaluated the situation, and made the pickup without incident. As the hoist was being lowered into the dark jungle, the survivor was unable to see it. Just as he was taking off his helmet, he felt the forest penetrator strike it. While such accuracy on the part of the hoist operator is commendable, all personnel have been briefed to place the penetrator four inches in front of the right shoulder in the future, lest the survivor's head get damaged. Light ground fire was experienced on return from this mission, but neither aircraft was damaged.

One beneficial thing resulted from the radio failure in the lead aircraft; we hope that this incident has settled once and for all, the question of why we send two aircraft on an air-crew recovery mission, rather than immediately scrambling the alert helicopter without a cover ship.

Other missions of interest include the rescue of two ARVN soldiers from a truck-jeep crash, six miles north of the base. They were literally pried from the wreckage by personnel on the scene, and originally flown to a point where an ambulance from Phan Rang city was to pick them up. Because of their serious wounds, when the ambulance was not there, they were flown to Phan Rang AB, and taken to the dispensary here.