

RING of FIRE

On 8 May 1968 **DET10 38 ARRS** was notified of a crashed and burning U.S. ARMY CH-47 Chinook Helicopter on the 190 radial ten miles from Binh Thuy Air Base. The Alert Bird **PEDRO 39** scrambled with the Fire Suppression Kit, 2 Airborne Rescuemen /Firefighters and a Pararescueman.



Arriving on scene it was observed that the now fiercely burning aircraft had crashed in the Defense Perimeter of an ARVN Outpost. Several of the helicopter's crewmembers could be seen lying in a ditch located behind a small tree. Because of the perimeter barbed wire and other obstacles, after landing the FSK, both **ABR's** and the **PJ** were forced to jump from the hovering Husky. As the **PJ** made his way to the injured personnel, the **ABR's** deployed the FSK hose and proceeded towards the burning aircraft to check for any trapped survivors.

Though dressed in clumberson Firefighting Clothing and ensuring not to puncture the hose, the **ABRs** crossed 3 sets of concertina wire and several ditches in minimum time. Arriving at the crashed aircraft one Rescueman entered the forward section of the big helicopter while the second Rescueman covered the entry and extinguished any threatening fire. The sound of exploding ammunition could be heard throughout the operation.

Having assessed that the personnel in the ditch had only minor injuries and not needing immediate treatment, the PJ repositioned to the edge of the perimeter covering the **ABRs** with his weapon.

Failing to find any trapped survivors, the FSK was expended on the burning aircraft.

PEDRO 39 had finally repositioned and landed in a clear area back from the edge of the Defense Perimeter. A U.S. Army Huey "Dustoff" landed behind them and medivaced the crash victims.

As the Rescuemen retrieved the hose and prepared the FSK for flight, a Vietnamese Soldier from the Outpost approached and told them that the area they had crossed was mined and booby trapped.



Edward Cartwright one of the Rescuemen on this mission provided the following narrative:

The best I remember, we jumped out of the chopper from about 10 ft. and deploying hose to the Chinook. I stepped in a hole with my right leg and pulled out a five gal can. I shook it off and later learned it was a bamboo stake booby trap. Good thing I HAD ON MY BOOTS or I would have had shit in my blood. The Chinook started cooking off ammo and SSGt Spickler stayed until he was certain no one else was inside. After we returned to base it kind of hit me that we could have bit the dust. I was glad no one was in the Chinook, but we had no way of knowing, so we did what we were trained to do. A pat on the back would have been good for me.

It seems like we took some small arms fire when we left the scene. There had been some fighting in the area before we got there.



For his actions during this mission, SGt Edward Cartwright was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The other crewmembers on this mission were:

(P) CAPT Thomas D. Precious

(CP) CAPT Albert E. Tollefsen

(PJ) SGt Lonnie G. Conner

(ABR) SSGt James E. Spickler

<u>Main</u>	<u>Old Guar</u>	<u>Things We</u>	<u>SAR/ ED</u>	<u>Mr. Husk</u>	<u>Sparrow</u>	<u>FlightSi</u>

FROM: 38RCC

9 May 68

SUBJ: Mission Narrative Report (10-38-30, 8 May 68)

TO: 10-38C *RES*
3800
3rd ARRGp (JSARC) *aw*

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1. This report is submitted IAW ARRSM 55-2/3rd ARRGp Sup 1 dated 15 Jun 67.

2. Det 10 was notified by tower at 0750GMT that a US Army Chinook had crashed and was burning on the 190 degree radial at 10 miles from Binh Thuy. Pedro 39 scrambled with the fire suppression kit at 0752GMT and arrived on scene at 0757GMT. The aircraft had crashed next to an outpost. During the approach to deliver the FSK the co-pilot spotted some of the Chinooks crew in a ditch beyond the outer barbed wire perimeter of the outpost. The firemen were offloaded and the PJ went to the downed crew to check for injuries and lend assistance, meanwhile the firemen charged the FSK. The aircraft was burning intensely with spontaneous explosions. The firemen immediately started suppressing the fire and checking the forward portion of the fuselage for any crewmembers that might have been trapped in the wreckage. When none were found they expended the remainder of the FSK trying to contain the fire and possibly save some of the aircraft equipment. The terrain in which this mission was being accomplished did hamper the actions of the ground party, it was the perimeter defense section of a friendly outpost and the area was covered with barb wire, punji sticks and booby traps, and a thick jungle tree line was only 50 yards from the crash site. During the time Pedro 39 was fighting the fire to check for trapped crewmembers, a Army Dustoff helicopter landed and Pedro's P.J. aided the crewmembers across barb wire fences to be evacuated by the Dust-off. Pedro was unable to find additional crewmembers and the wreckage was exploding with more force. The decision was made to pull out and Pedro left the area at 0811GMT. Explosions were audible and frequent however no ground fire was definitely seen. No hits were sustained by Pedro. Rescap was excellent and was provided by US Army armed UH1's and a flight of A-37's.

3. Not available

4. Crewmembers of Pedro 39:

RCC	Capt Thomas D. Precious
RCCP	Capt Albert E. Tollefsen
PJ	Sgt Lonnie G. Conner
RS	SSgt James E. Spickler
RS	Sgt Edward L. Cartwright

Thomas D. Precious
THOMAS D. PRECIOUS, Capt., USAF
Rescue Crew Commander

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MISSION NARRATIVE: Det 10, 38th ARRSq, Mission 10-38-30, 8 May 68

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CREW: (All assigned to Det 10, 38th ARRSq otherwise indicated)

RCC	Capt Thomas D. Precious
RCCP	Capt Albert E. Tollefsen
PJ	Sgt Lonnie G. Conner
*RS	SSgt James E. Spickler
*RS	Sgt Edward L. Cartwright

*Assigned to 632d Cmbt Spt Gp

Supporting Document #2