

7-11-70
SAR

PILOTS RESCUED FROM A SHAU VALLEY

DA NANG AFLD, Vietnam — A recent search and rescue (SAR) operation by the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here resulted in the rescue of two downed Marine pilots in the A Shau valley.

"We received word that a Marine A-4 was down over the south end of the A Shau valley, and the survivors had parachuted from the stricken craft and landed about a mile apart," stated Maj. Harry S. Copperthite, aircraft commander of one of the four helicopters involved in the SAR.

"Arriving over the scene, we noticed fighter aircraft flying protective cover," continued the major. "There was no observable activity on the ground so I made a run in on the first downed pilot and recovered him without incident," he said.

GROUND FIRE

"The second run was not to be as easy for we received enemy automatic weapon fire from the ground as we started our approach for the second pilot," exclaimed Sgt. John C. Kriletich, a flight engineer aboard the rescue helicopter. "We immediately pulled off the target and joined with the other helicopter in the flight. As another flight of helicopters had arrived over the scene we were instructed to return to DaNang with our one passenger," he said.

The next flight of helicopters arriving on the scene was briefed on the operation, and the 'low bird', the rescue helicopter commanded by Lt. Col. Albert L. Holcomb, 37th ARRSq commander, made the initial approach.

"As we approached the area where we suspected the second Marine was located, he popped a smoke flare, and we sighted him immediately," stated Colonel Holcomb.

FIGHTING BACK

"However, as we approached the smoke, we started taking hits from enemy ground fire surrounding the downed pilot," said the colonel. "We immediately pulled off the target to check the helicopter for damage. All systems seemed to be operating normally, so it was decided to attempt another rescue," he said.

"On this attempt crewmembers aboard the helicopter fired at the enemy with automatic weapons as we went into our hover to lower the jungle penetrator for the pilot to ride up on. The fighter aircraft flying cover also dropped ordnance and strafed the area. A heavy smoke screen was also put down by the

fighters," declared the colonel.

"This proved effective as the enemy fire passed below and away from us," explained Colonel Holcomb.

"You can believe that it was one very happy pilot we lifted aboard a few minutes later," concluded the colonel.

Both rescued pilots were examined later at DaNang and found to be in need

'GREAT WAY TO START A TOUR' PILOT SAYS OF FIRST MISSION

TUY HOA AB, Vietnam (7AF) — "It was a great way to start a tour," said Lt. Col. Sidney M. Spilseth, 39th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron executive officer and an HC-130 Hercules pilot here, in recalling his first rescue mission.

The colonel was referring to the successful extraction of an A-1 Skyraider pilot who was shot down while on a recent interdiction mission over Laos.

"The squadron was alerted around 2 a.m.," he said. "After a thorough briefing and a check of the weather in the area our first HC-130 rescue aircraft departed here at 4:30 a.m. for a 'first light effort' to rescue the downed airman.

"A C-123 Provider aircraft, acting as a flareship, had remained in the area during the night to maintain voice contact with the pilot. When the 39th ARRSq HC-130 arrived in the area to set up an aerial command post, the flareship reported that the downed man was in good shape and that the crew had gotten a closer fix on his position," the colonel continued.

"Shortly after the A-1s arrived on the scene, a Skyraider pilot noticed enemy movement around the downed pilot's chute. Shortly thereafter the chute disappeared. Fortunately, by this time the pilot had moved more than 100 feet away from the location of his chute.

"The propeller-driven Skyraiders kept directing in jets to silence heavy AA and smaller automatic weapons fire in the vicinity of the downed airman. We had another HC-130 aircraft in the area acting as a refueling tanker for the heli-

of little more than a bath and a hot meal after their rescue by the men of the 37th ARRSq.

Flying rescue missions in Southeast Asia since 1965, the two Marines were saves 582 and 583 for the men of the squadron whose motto is "That Others May Live."

icopters, and the Hercules crew was briefed on the search effort in progress and alerted to act as a secondary command post in case any of the search aircraft went down and a secondary rescue effort developed," Colonel Spilseth related.

"Strikes continued throughout the morning, as weather permitted, to silence the heavy gunfire. After conducting eight aerial refuelings the 39th ARRSq tanker in the area had to head to Nakhon Phanom (NKP) (Royal Thai Air Force Base) in Thailand to refuel. After 45 minutes on the ground the rescue tanker was back to the rescue effort and continued its refueling of the helicopters," he said.

"My aircraft arrived in the area shortly after noon. After a thorough briefing we assumed airborne mission command responsibility. Throughout the day we kept cycling in strike aircraft to silence the enemy guns as they opened up on our rescue forces. Around 5:30 p.m. we began moving our HH-3 and HH-53 helicopters (Jolly Green Giants) closer in to the main scene of action to get them ready for a pick-up attempt.

After further silencing resistance in the area, we were ready for the pickup with virtually no ground resistance, and the helicopters moved out to regroup at NKP

"While certainly not the longest mission the squadron has worked, for some have gone on as long as three days, for me it was a great way to start a tour," Colonel Spilseth concluded.

FROM THE
COMBAT ZONE