Pedro crewmen rescue two pilots from sea

DA NANG AFLD—Two Air Force pilots were forced to eject from their battle-damaged F-4 Phantom over Da Nang recently while attempting to bring the crippled aircraft to a safe landing here.

Almost immediately, rescue crews from the area were on the scene and the two pilots were pulled safely on board a hovering HH-43 Pedro helicopter from Detachment 7, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

Maj. Floyd R. Lockhart and Capt. Kenneth R. Bissett Jr. were the aircraft commander and co-pilot, respectively, of the rescue helicopter.

According to Major Lockhart, his crew had been alerted and standing-by for an emergency since they first received word of the approaching crippled aircraft.

"We scrambled out over the bay and were orbiting the area when the pilots ejected," he said. "We could see the chutes and contacted our control point for clearance to go in for the pick-up. We went in and got one man and then went in for the other; it was as simple as that."

Operating the hoist on the rescue helicopter were Staff Sergeants Louis J. Maloney and Joseph J. Gula, airborne fire-fighters from the 366th Civil Engineering Squadron, attached to the 38th.

"We spotted both people in the water and they gave the 'thumbs up' sign signifying that they were okay," recalled Sergeant Maloney. "We sent down the penetrator and the first survivor climbed on and we pulled him in and then went after the other one and did the same thing."

A1C Leon J. Raska, an aerial helicopter mechanic on the rescue crew, assisted with the hoist and helped pull the men through the door of the helicopter to safety. "It really went smooth," he commented. "Everybody seemed to get right in there and do the job. It was really like a textbook rescue."

Sgt. Richard G. Cobbett, a medical technician from the 366th USAF Dispensary, attached to the 38th, examined the survivors when they were safely on board the rescue helicopter and he described their condition as being "in good shape and good spirits."