

Bien Hoa's Pedro rescue helicopter was on the spot when 1st Lt. Carl O. Walinski was forced to land his OV-10 Bronco with the nose gear up recently. A little

shaken but unhurt, the lieutenant remarked, "Pedro was a comforting sight."

U.S. Air Force Photo by MSgt. Sam Sears

Picked up twice in 16 days

FAC pair rescued near Dak To

DA NANG AFLD — "I was thinking maybe we had run out of luck," recalled Capt. Arthur S. Moxom after he and Maj. Samuel R. Ross were rescued from an enemy infested area near Dak To recently.

It was the second rescue of the two forward air controllers in 16 days. They were first shot down by enemy antiaircraft fire near Boloven's Plateau in Laos. They were pulled to safety by rescue crews of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, the "Jolly Greens" of Da Nang.

Sixteen days after their first brush with death, the two men again became the subjects of a massive search and rescue operation.

While on a visual reconnaissance

mission in the tri-border region where the boundaries of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam meet, they developed problems in the left engine of their twin-engine OV-10 Bronco.

After a futile attempt to revive the engine, they dropped the external rocket pods and fuel tanks to lighten the aircraft in order to keep enough altitude to fly to Pleiku AB.

"Our main concern was trying to hold level flight, which became increasingly difficult as time went on," said the major. "We were already below most of the peaks in the area, but we were hoping to nurse the aircraft through the valleys in the area to nearby Dak To."

For nearly 30 minutes, the crew dodged the mountaintops in the area, trying to bring the crippled aircraft to a safe landing.

Finally, the ridges were above the aircraft and it began to roll at the low level, so the crewmen decided to eject.

"I ejected first," explained Captain Moxom, "and as I was coming down I saw the plane impact on a ridge. I didn't see Major Ross' parachute and all I could think of was that he didn't get out. I was looking all around, trying to spot his chute, hoping that he had made it. Right before I hit the

ground, I spotted him. It was then that I realized I had no idea where I was going to land, and I looked down and saw I was headed towards water.

"I tried to steer the chute towards the east, but landed in the water anyway," he continued. "My first thought was of drowning, but I felt the mud under my feet and knew it wasn't deep enough to require inflating the life preservers.

"Once I got clear of the water, I immediately saw Major Ross up the hill waving at me, and I headed towards him. We both looked at each other and my first thought was, 'Oh no! We don't want to go through this again!' This was the first time I fully realized it had happened twice."

Rescue forces had been alerted and immediately went to work. Crews from the 37th ARRS, their previous rescuers, were on the way and nearby U.S. Army helicopters headed for the SAR area.

Helicopter gunships and A-1 Sandys from the 56th Special Operations Wing saturated the enemy-infested area to locate and suppress any enemy gunfire before the rescue aircraft arrived.

An Army UH-1 Huey helicopter took them to Dak To where the "Jolly Greens" picked them up and returned them to Da Nang.

