

Over water

Frederick L. Holmes
(1793)

On December 30, 1971, Lieutenant Commander Holmes and his co-pilot, Lieutenant Burton, were the lead A-6 aircraft in a strike mission over North Vietnam. Their aircraft was observed to take a direct hit from a surface to air missile. Lieutenant Burton was wounded, blown clear of the aircraft and his parachute deployed successfully. Another aircraft on the scene reported seeing two good chutes deploy, but this report was later viewed as not confirmed. A search and rescue aircraft then reported both pilots in sight and in the water off Hon Nieu Island. Lieutenant Burton was rescued by U.S. forces. SAR forces located a pilot's ejection seat and life raft possibly belonging to Lieutenant Commander Holmes but were unable to locate either him or his chute in an area with a large number of North Vietnamese sampans.

A Radio Hanoi broadcast referenced this incident, one of several U.S. aircraft losses on the same date in the southern part of North Vietnam. While some pilots were reported captured alive, Lieutenant Commander Holmes' name was not identified among those captured. One returning POW recognized Lieutenant Commander Holmes' name but no returning POWs ever reported him alive in the northern Vietnamese prison system.

In April 1975 Lieutenant Commander Holmes case was submitted for a casualty review at the request of his next of kin. He was declared dead/body not recovered.