

6 May 1972

A-7E 156879 VA-22, USN, USS *Coral Sea*

Lt Marvin Benjamin Christopher Wiles (KIA)

A pair of A-7s on an armed reconnaissance mission south of Vinh spotted a SAM launch a few miles to the south of their position. The leading aircraft was flown by Cdr Roger Sheets, the air wing commander of CVW-5. The aircraft turned south and Cdr Sheets made a bombing run on the SAM site. At the same time an Iron Hand aircraft from another flight fired a Shrike missile at the SAM radar which, combined with the A-7's bombs, destroyed much of the site. As Cdr Sheets came round to start his next pass he saw an aircraft on fire diving towards the ground. Lt Wiles's aircraft had been hit by a missile from another SAM site but the pilot ejected and came down 15 miles northwest of Dong Hoi. Cdr Sheets saw Marvin Wiles land right in the middle of a small village but the ground fire was so intense that the Commander had to leave the area and return to the carrier. It was presumed that as Lt Wiles had landed in a village that he had been captured and would have been among the prisoners returned at the end of the war. However, Marvin Wiles apparently never made it to a POW camp and information subsequently received suggests that he was killed in the village while trying to resist capture. He was originally buried in the village but his body was later exhumed by Vietnamese officials and has not yet been traced.