

10 May 72 Oyster **01 SAR**

Flying an F-4 (call sign Oyster 01) on **10 May 1972**, Major Robert A. Lodge and Captain Robert C. Locher shot down their third MIG. Shortly thereafter, they were shot down by another MIG approximately 40 miles west of Hanoi. Although the pilot, Major Lodge, was never recovered, Captain Locher, the weapons system operator, was rescued after 23 days of E&E in North Vietnam. During the E&E, Captain Locher subsisted on fruits, nuts, berries, and an ample supply of water. Captain Locher stated: (U) One day I eyed a banana tree all day. It didn't have any bananas on it, but remembered I could get water out of it. Just before evening I stuck a hole in it and got myself three pints of good banana water. He was also able to obtain various vegetables by raiding native gardens. Captain Locher continually changed his position in search of cover, food, and water. He moved a total of 15 miles, but he was unable to make contact with any U.S. aircraft. On 1 June, Captain Locher heard U.S. airplanes conducting bombing missions. He knew that when the bombing ended, the planes would egress the target area, and he might be able to contact them. He successfully made radio contact, and a search and rescue operation was initiated. However, the first SAR attempt was driven off by MIGs.

(U) The next day a SARTF consisting of Jolly Greens from the 40th ARRSq, HC-130 King aircraft, and A-1 Sandys from the 56th SOW, covered by F-4 Phantoms and F-105 Thunderchiefs, began the second SAR attempt. Heavy ground fire was encountered on the way to and from the rescue area which was located deep within the NVN heartland. With the Jolly Greens orbiting, the Sandys made several passes over the area. They then led a Jolly Green commanded by Captain Dale E. Stovall to a position over Captain Locher. Automatic weapon fire erupted from a nearby building, but was silenced by the miniguns on the Jolly Green. The flight engineer lowered the jungle penetrator and Captain Locher climbed on. Captain Locher stated, "It sure is a good feeling to get that penetrator, strap on, give them a thumbs-up and hang on." Captain Locher was brought on board and the helicopter began the long trip home.

(U) During the return trip, the task force encountered enemy fire from villages, trucks, and a train. One A-1 Sandy from the 1st Special Operations Squadron (SOS) of the 56th SOW, attacked the train using bombs, 20mm cannons, and rockets. The pilot stated that: (U) There was a pretty good gunner firing tracers up on either side of me as I went in. I finally put two rockets into the engine and the steam shot up about 300 feet. It was a beautiful sight. Other Sandy's made passes along the train and left all of the cars burning or destroyed.

NOTE: See CHECO SEA SAR 1Apr72-30Jun73 best for other significant SARs flown