

33rd ARS Hist, Oct-Dec 1965

c. Combat Operations

(1) Combat flying for period 1 October to 31 December 1965 totaled 1254 hours. There were 135 SEA missions. Five open sea landings were made during the quarter with five (5) pilots saved.

(a) Mission # 1084-1 November 1965 2 Sorties. HU-16 Pilot rescued from northern Gulf of Tonkin: Captain Norman F. Huggins, Mullins, South Carolina. Rescue crew responded to May-Day call from Wingman. Position of HU-16 was 140 miles from scene. Distressed pilot had ejected over water, drifted over a hostile island, and landed in the water 100 yards from the island. Survivor was under hostile small arms fire from shore and three swimmers were trying to outflank him. Prior to the rescue a running gun battle had been in progress with one of the swimmers. The Rescue aircraft remained under hostile fire throughout the rescue. A small armed junk was neutralized while the HU-16 was rescuing the survivor. The aircraft was in the water for four minutes. Take-off was made into a rain shower and transition instruments was necessary. An uneventful flight to Danang AB followed. The HU-16 sustained no damage.

CREW	RCC	Captain David P. Wastenbarger
	CP	Captain David K. Wendt
	NAV	1st Lt Donald S. Price
	RO	SSgt Frank J. Trombino
	FM	A1C James M. Allen
	Pararescueman	A2C James E. Fleiman

(b) Mission # 1111-7 November 1965. 2 Sorties. HU-16 Pilot rescued from the Gulf of Tonkin: Lieutenant Commander Charles Gale Jack, 595696 USN, Effingham, Illinois. Rescue crew responded to May-Day call from Wingman. Due to excessive chatter on frequency, radar vectors from friendly ship were blocked off and the HU-16 was vectored by DF steers on the Wingman. Survivor was 15 miles from shore and 1/2 mile from fishing boats. An open sea landing was made, the pilot rescued, and without further incident returned to friendly base.

CREW	RCC	1st Lt Joseph G. Kirby
	CP	1st Lt Robert M. Kramer
	NAV	Captain Roger J. Coslett
	RO	SSgt Harold R. Erickson
	FM	SSgt Patrick D. McCoy
	Pararescueman	SSgt Larry D. Huxett

**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE SILVER STAR  
TO  
JAMES E. PLEIMAN**

Airman Second Class James E. Pleiman distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 1 November 1965. On that date, Airman Pleiman was instrumental in effecting the safe and expeditious recovery of a United States Air Force RF-101 Pilot from hostile waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. With complete disregard for his safety, and with armed hostile swimmers within one hundred feet of him, Airman Pleiman jumped into the water to assist the pilot. This courageous and aggressive action promulgated against overwhelming odds, resulted in reducing the time the aircraft and crew were exposed to hostile fire. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Airman Pleiman has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



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13. ~~30-1001-30 Oct 65 (C)~~. At 1209H the radio operator at Quang Tri, RVN, intercepted a May Day from an Army UH-1B that had crashed. Two HH-43 helicopters that were on alert at Quang Tri scrambled, and an HU-16 was diverted to the incident scene. The downed helicopter was located and the crew taken to a forward Army outpost. The two HH-43 pilots, Capt John Keen and Capt Arvo then returned to alert duty at Quang Tri. 18

14. ~~30-123-123-172-1 Nov 65 (C)~~. On 1 Nov 65 the tower at Tan Son Nhut AB informed the 138 unit of a P-2V landing with one engine out. One HH-43B scrambled with a fire suppression kit and intercepted the aircraft on final approach. The P-2V blew a tire on landing, and as the aircraft came to a stop on the runway a magnesium fire broke out in the left wheel well; the flames engulfing the entire wing. The HH-43B hovered and directed its rotor wash so as to keep flames from igniting the fuel tanks or the paraflares that were mounted on the wing. They continued this until the fire trucks arrived and extinguished the flames. Due to the action of the HH-43B pilot, Capt Alden, the 13 crewmembers of the P-2V escaped without injuries.

15. ~~30-1001-1001-1 Nov 65 (3)~~ On 1 Nov 65, Capt Higgins was forced to eject from his RF-101 over the North Vietnamese coast. He hit the water approximately 100 yards from shore. Fortunately, another RF-101 was in the area and was able to immediately locate the raft. The HU-16 along with two USN A1H aircraft proceeded to the scene. As the pilot was spotted the HU-16 began an approach for a water landing; however a go-around was initiated because a sampan was approaching the downed pilot. The A1H RESCAP aircraft were directed by the HU-16 to fire across the bow of the sampan. This was done; however, the sampan continued toward the survivor. On the next pass the sampan was sunk approximately 100 yards from the survivor. The HU-16 then water landed, and as it was taxiing to the survivor noted three armed swimmers also attempting to reach the downed pilot. During this entire time machine gun fire from the shore was being directed at both the survivor and the HU-16, and Capt Higgins was engaged in a pistol duel with the swimmers. The HU-16 called for the RESCAP aircraft to make a pass at the swimmers and taxied to the survivor. The uninjured survivor was taken aboard, and flown to Danang by the HU-16 MCC, Capt David Barger.

16. ~~30-1001-1001-1 Nov 65 (3)~~ On 1 Nov 65, Lt Cadr Billy V. Wheat ejected from his A4C over North Vietnam. His wingman noted the successful bailout and alerted the HU-16 on precautionary orbit over the Gulf of Tonkin, which in turn alerted the rescue center at Udorn AB, Thailand. An EC-54 was diverted to the scene, and two HH-43 aircraft were scrambled from Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. Occasionally beacon signals were heard, but no visual nor voice contact was made by the time the HH-43's had reached their bingo fuel time.

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1 NOV 65

# **Farthest North Viet Sea Rescue Saves Captain**

**TAN SON NHUT AB, Viet-**  
nam — In the most northerly  
sea rescue so far in the war  
here, an RF-101 pilot was  
picked up after bailing out  
over the North China Sea.

The pilot, Capt. Norman P.  
Huggins, was completing a  
photo reconnaissance mission  
over the SAM sites destroyed  
by air strikes when his aircraft  
was hit by automatic weapons  
fire. He headed out to sea  
and bailed out near Ile Des  
Sangliers, 57 miles east of  
Haiphong.

He spent about an hour on  
the water in his life raft be-  
fore being picked up by an  
HU-16 from Det. 7, 38th Air  
Rescue Sq., Da Nang AB.

As the twin-engine amphibi-  
ous airplane approached the  
area, the pilot, Capt. David P.  
Westenbarger, saw a sampan  
headed for the life raft. He  
called in an air strike of  
A-1Es to warn the sampan to  
stay away, and one Skyraider  
placed several shots across its  
bow. When the boat did not  
alter course, both A-1Es  
strafed it, and left it swamped  
and sinking.

Captain Huggins said he re-  
ceived machine gun fire from  
the shore, a few hundred  
yards away, but neither he  
nor the Albatross was hit.