

Leave No Man Behind

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Part IV-9 Indian Summer Navy Late '66

The HS-6 Indian Gal pilots not assigned to the (combat) SAR det continued their logistics and ASW missions. On 20 August, 1966 Lieutenant Bill Roy and his crew, copilot Lieutenant Vann Goodloe, AX3 Rodger A. Sitko, and AX3 Russell G. Sprague, were minding their own business in an ASW exercise safely off the coast, when they received an emergency call requesting that they proceed to a location 20 miles north of Dong Hoi, and about nine miles inland. There, an Air Force RF-4C pilot from the 16th TRS was down and in big trouble. Shot down the night before at about 0300, Captain Edwin. T. "Tiff" Hawks had been on the run all night pursued by the sound of gongs and multiple voices and the baying of at least three dogs. After an exhausting night, the haggard Hawks had finally established radio contact at 0745 that morning with a flight of F-105s, who put out the word. Within 25 minutes, two A-1s, callsign Locket, from VA-152, USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34) checked in with him and began the process of locating him. Despite his scrambling across and up a mountain, the enemy were closing in and the Lockets could not stop them. There was not time for distant Air Force or Navy combat SAR helicopters to respond. Roy accepted the mission. Once again, like Campbell and Howell of HS-2, and Terry and Klippert of HS-4, a helicopter not configured for the dangerous mission was tasked to perform overland CSAR. They had no armor, and no guns on board.

Roy dashed in, guided by the on-scene RESCORT commander Locket leader Lieutenant John Feldhaus, who was able to direct him between known enemy AAA sites along the coast, more scattered than the dense defenses closer to Dong Hoi. Approaching the area, they sighted the night-end of a Mk-13 emergency flare Hawks had tossed into a ridgetop clearing, and Roy immediately made an approach for pickup. As the Navy SH-3A neared the spot, they sighted enemy soldiers within 100 yards of Hawks, and Roy waved off his approach, taking small arms fire as he did. The Lockets rolled in with rockets and cannon fire to knock back the soldiers, roaring over at 50 feet altitude and lower, providing some working room for the unarmed helicopter. Under the attack pattern of the RESCORT, Bill Roy came back around and made another approach to a hover, with AX3 Rodger Sitko efficiently deploying the jungle penetrator to the ground from right on the tree tops. Braving small arms and automatic weapons fire from all around, Hawks broke cover, ran into the open clearing, and quickly opened and mounted the seat as hostile arms fire increased from the enemy closing in through the trees. They received near point blank fire as they departed, Tiff Hawks hanging on the seat as the helicopter streamed him below during the climbing departure, the enemy too close for the strafing runs to deter them, and with no defensive machine guns on the helicopter to

oppose them. Clear of the ground fire, Roy flew within range of an unknown AAA concentration enroute back to feet wet. With only evasion as a defensive weapon, he descended as low as he could get, down among the treetops, turning away from muzzle flashes as they were sighted, and at last gained the safety of the sea.