

SYNOPSIS OF THE EVENTS PRECIPITATING THE FOLLOWING AWARDS

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The helicopter and crew were vectored to a position only twenty miles south of the northern border of North Vietnam to rescue a downed Air Force fighter pilot. The survivor was reported to be in a raft under heavy enemy shore fire from several of the northern-most inner islands of the Fai Tsi Long Chain. As the rescue helicopter began its low level, high speed penetration of the enemy defensive positions on the seaward islands, it was taken under a hail of automatic weapons and mortar fire. The crew returned the enemy's fire with accurate machine gun bursts. The enemy fire was so intense and so well directed, an accompanying Air Force rescue amphibian was forced to retire. The helicopter's gunners were able to blunt the effect of the enemy opposition to such an extent that the pilot decided to continue to thread his way through the hostile islands. After traversing more than eight miles of heavy fire, the helicopter finally came to a spot between two islands where withering gun fire made further progress toward the survivor impossible. The helicopter pilot called for fire support from Skyraider aircraft which had joined the helicopter to suppress enemy opposition threatening the rescue. A Skyraider descended upon the enemy positions and stilled their guns with barrages of cannon fire enabling the helicopter to continue its race toward the downed fighter pilot. After being subjected to intense fire during the fourteen mile trek toward the rescue scene, the helicopter crew spotted the pilot in his raft only 300 yards from enemy positions on Nui Cuong Island. As the crew made their approach to pick up the survivor, the Skyraiders again pounded enemy personnel who fired automatic weapons at the helicopter. The persistent enemy continued to fire in spite of the protection which the Skyraiders sought to give the

helicopter during its hover for the pickup. Although under fire, with skillful coordinated effort, the pilots and the crewmen were able to get the survivor aboard overcoming mechanical difficulties which developed in the hoist during rescue. The success of the rescue was now assured providing the helicopter could fight its way back through fourteen miles of enemy guns to safety. The crew sped through the hostile islands bobbing, weaving, returning enemy fire in a determined effort to thwart all opposition which might deny their escape. During this heroic action the enemy brought his weapons to bear on the helicopter for more than thirty-five minutes in a desperate attempt to prevent the helicopter crew from rescuing a fellow airman.