

Summary of Events in the Rescue of LT E. L. FOSS, USN, Attack Squadron 55,
on 24 July 1966, off CAP MUI RON Peninsula, North Vietnam.

At approximately 1740H, 24 July 1966, NS-51 with a crew consisting of LCDR R. D. NICHOLS, Helicopter Aircraft Commander; LTJG R. GRANT, Pilot; SMITH, G. W., AX3, USN, First Crewman, and ROBERTS, R. L., AMH2, USN, Second Crewman, was on SAR station in the vicinity of USS REEVES (DLG-24), the Southern SAR destroyer, when a distress call was intercepted from an A-4 aircraft over the mainland of North Vietnam. When the transmission was received, the pilot immediately got an ADF bearing, and the helicopter proceeded Southwest towards the disabled aircraft at maximum speed.

At about 1743H, USS REEVES (DLG-24) vectored NS-51 217⁰M/36 miles. The Aircraft Commander estimated the location was close to shore in the vicinity of CAP MUI RON Peninsula, an area known to be defended by enemy AAA and automatic weapons. The crew put on flak vests and made preparations for the pickup.

At approximately 1753H, VA-55 aircraft 401 reported the pilot had ejected and was in the water about 1500/2000 yards off shore at 18⁰06'N, 106⁰23'E. NS-51 informed VA-55 401 the helicopter would be over the survivor in twelve minutes to make the rescue. When about 10 miles from the rescue area, NS-51 requested that a RESCAP aircraft be detached to escort the helicopter into the area. At about five miles from shore the survivor's distress signal smoke was sighted; the RESCAP aircraft joined NS-51 about one mile from the survivor and proceeded towards shore, calling when on top. The Aircraft Commander decided to descend to 100 feet and make a high speed approach using evasive tactics in order to reduce the enemy AAA threat. The rescue concept was to get in, get the survivor, and get out as expeditiously as possible. The pickup approach was made at high speed with a final abrupt turn back to the survivor to point the tail of the helicopter in the direction from which enemy fire was expected. The sling was dropped to the downed pilot, and as soon as the survivor was clear of the water, the helicopter immediately departed seaward. The evolution was so successful that the helicopter was in a hover less than thirty seconds, and the entire operation including approach, rescue and retirement took less than two minutes. Although the helicopter was well within range of 37MM and 58MM AAA weapons during its pickup, no fire was observed, possibly because the enemy had insufficient time in which to bring his weapons to bear.

Once clear of the area, and after determining the survivor did not require immediate medical attention and that all aircraft in the area were clear of the coast, NS-51 requested, and was granted, permission to proceed directly to USS RANGER (CVA-61), landing at 1910H.

LCDR R. D. NICHOLS, USN

LTJG R. GRANT, USNR

SMITH, G. W., AX3, USN

ROBERTS, R. L., AMH2, USN

Enclosure (2)