

HC-7 RESCUE 55 ⁽¹⁾ 17-Sep-1968 (Tuesday)

SH-3A Sikorsky Seaking helo Det 110 Big Mother 70 1497335
USS Richmond K. Turner (DLG-20) Combat Day ⁽²⁾
6.5 miles off North Vietnam coast – 7.0 miles off island
Water: 84° Air: 87° Wind: 10 knots Sea State: Calm

Pilot – LTJG Donald L. Nicholson
Co-pilot - LTJG Richard W. Griffith
1st crew – AO-3 Dale O. Grimes
2nd crew – ADJAN Robert K. Stover

Alert received - 1243: Ship's IMC
Vehicle departed – 1248: 29 miles
Arrived on scene – 1305: no search required
Located survivor - 1305: sighted smoke
Begin retrieval - 1306: smoke
Ended retrieval – 1308: Returned to DLG-20
Survivor disembarked – 1327:

F-8H Crusader 148648 (Page Boy-204) VF-24, (Fighting Renegades)
(Checkertails⁽¹²⁾ USN
USS Hancock (CVA-19)

Ltjg Paul E. Swigart Jr.

A section of Crusaders on a BARCAP mission engaged a number of Mig-21s near Vinh. After a long, indecisive engagement, Lt Cdr Red Isaacks and Lt Swigart had to break away from the fight when their fuel began to run low. The pair climbed towards the coast to rendezvous with a tanker for the return flight to the Hancock. However, minutes later the engine of Lt Swigart's Crusader flamed out due to fuel starvation and the pilot ejected, coming down in the sea five miles from the island of Hon Nieu off the coast near Vinh. A SAR helicopter later picked him up safely. LT Swigart was killed in a ramp strike accident on 4 February 1969. ⁽⁵⁾ (F-8-H 147919) ⁽⁵⁾

While on South SAR station at 12:45 the SAR alarm sounded aboard USS Richmond K. Turner. 3 minutes later, Big Mother 70 launches and at 1:52 Clementine 2 follows. Cruising with Turner is USS Isbell (DD-869). Vectored 29 miles, approximately one mile off the coast ⁽¹⁰⁾, Big Mother locates a

smoke at 13:05, no search required. 13:08 survivor hoisted aboard helo, no hostile fire received.⁽¹⁰⁾ 13:27 Big Mother 70 is recovered aboard USS Turner, Swigart had no injuries. 13:30 Big Mother is launched, Clementine 2, is recovered at 13:31. Clementine 2, folded and stuffed, as Big Mother 70 returns at 13:45 to land on the fantail. 14:50 Big Mother is launched to recover "Protector 47" at 15:16, they stay on deck for 3 minutes, 15:21 Big Mother returns to the fantail. USS Turner cruises to return to South SAR station. Swigart, checked out and cleaned up, Big Mother launches at 18:14 with Swigart.⁽¹²⁾



Note: Position of downed aircraft from W. Howard Plunkett USAF retired, approx 6 miles off coast. Note from helo pilot Nicholson states "we picked him up about one mile off coast." USS Richmond K. Turner deck logs have NO ship's positions shown, placed 26 miles from rescue position.

- 1) Numbering as per HC-7 Rescue Log (accumulative rescue number)
- 2) HC-7 1968 Command Report
- 3) HC-7 Det 110 Rescue report
- 4) Map – Google Earth
- 5) "Vietnam - Air Losses" By: Chris Hobson (with permission)
- 6) Loss aircraft location data provided by: W. Howard Plunkett (LtCol USAF, retired)
- 10) HC-7 History collection; Ron Milam - Historian
- 12) USS Richmond K. Turner – Deck Logs

(Compiled / written by: Ron Milam, HC-7 Historian - HC-7, 2-1969 to 7-1970, Det 108 & 113)