

HC-7 Attempted RESCUE 11-Jun-1968

(Tuesday)

SH-3A Sikorsky Seaking helo Det 110 Big Mother 71
USS Yorktown (CVS-10) Combat Night ⁽²⁾ 2 miles **INLAND**

Pilot – LTJG	Richard A. Wiley
Co-pilot - LTJG	George C. Gring
1st crew – ATN-2	Leonard J. Gonerka
2nd crew – AX-3	James A. Lawrence

SAR Stand By aboard USS Yorktown (CVS-10)

02:55 - IMC in Ready Room #1

03:08 - 280/55 Channel 13

03:38 - At this time served back up

Never found him ourselves

Flat, Sandy, lone hill along sea coast. Villages to the south and west. Fields to west. Trees in along beach. M-60 machine guns to suppress hostile fire.

1. No voice or visual signals with survivor subsequent to SH-3A relief of UH-2A which had previously entered search area.
2. Aft station crewman wounded due to failure of machine gun shield to stop/deflect small calib (7.62 type) ordnance.
3. Possible beeper decoy.
4. Suspect trap due to disposition of enemy forces and intensity of ground fire.

USS America – deck log:

03:01 A-7A, Bureau number 153265 of VA-86, pilot LCDR Randolph W. FORD, USN, crashed on land at approximate position LAT 18°-19'N, LONG 106°-03. Pilot ejected from aircraft, rescue operations in progress.

A-7A 153265 (AE-404) (Sidewinder 404) VA-86, (Sidewinders) USN,
USS America (CVA-66)

LT Cdr Randolph W. Ford (KIA)

Born: 7-19-1935 POW 6-11-1968 – Casualty 6-20-1968

Body recovered: 8-14-1985

Wall Panel 55 W – Row 005

The Corsair had more advanced avionics than the Skyhawk and was better suited to night operations, although it was not in the same class as the Intruder. On the night of the 10th a section of Corsairs flew a road reconnaissance mission along the main coastal road, 30 miles southeast of Vinh. LtCdr Ford's dropped a flare for his wingman to see if there was any traffic on the road. Moments later the wingman saw a huge fireball on the ground and then heard Lt Cdr Ford's voice on his survival radio. The pilot was descending in his parachute but had a broken right arm and other injuries. There was no indication as to the cause of the loss. Information was later received that Lt Cdr Ford had died of his wounds a few days after capture.
(5)

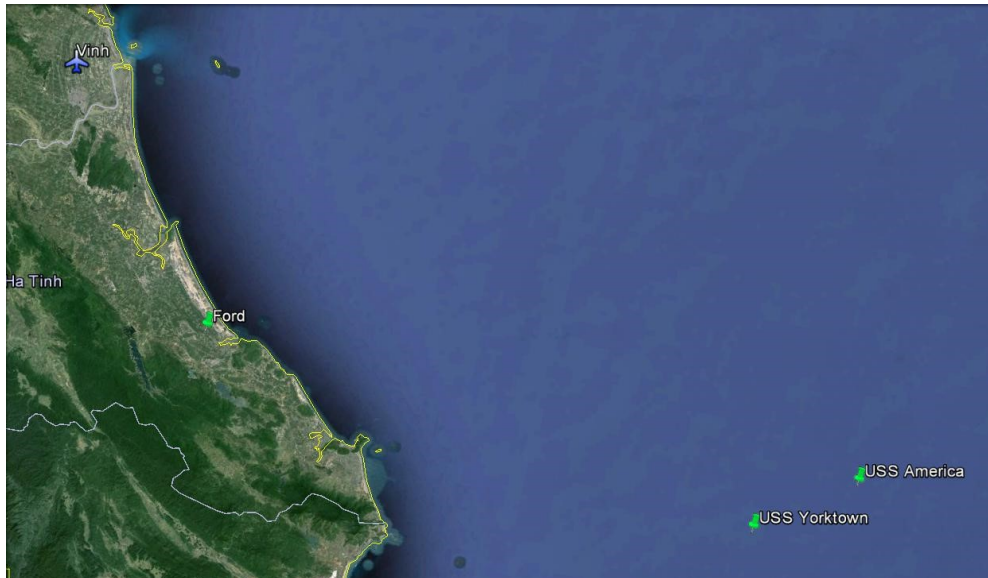
Declassified Message;

SAR efforts Big Mother 71

1. Yesterday's professional and heroic efforts of Big Mother 71 crew's rescue attempts for Sidewinder 404 are deeply appreciated. I am sure that if it had been at all possible, Big Mother crew would have brought pilot out.
2. Please pass my personal well done to the Big Mother 71 crew and my wishes for a speedy recovery to the injured crewman. GP-4

Can't believe it. Thought I was the only one who remembered Hymie. Got a story about him being wounded, as related to me by Johnny Green, plane captain for that bird. I mentioned it before, but don't know if you got it. Maybe Hymie could corroborate it. I was on flight deck when they returned from the rescue attempt. Bird was shot up pretty bad. VC had transmitter and used it to pull them in to the hornets' nest. Tex Wiley pilot. I believe Gring was co-pilot; I remember he sat there a long time after shut down, didn't move. Probably praying. (that's just my interpretation.)

I kinda remembering Hymie flipping off the island as they pulled him out of the bird.
Mikey Haines



- 1) Numbering as per HC-7 Rescue Log (accumulative rescue number)
- 2) HC-7 Rescue Log
- 3) HC-7 Det 110 Rescue report
- 4) Map – Google Earth
- 5) "Vietnam - Air Losses" By: Chris Hobson (with permission)
- 10) HC-7 History collection; Ron Milam - Historian
- 12) USS Yorktown – no data within deck logs

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