

HC-7 Attempt RESCUE 2-Oct-1969 (Thursday)

SH-3A Sikorsky Seaking helo Det 110 Big Mothers
USS Constellation (CVA-64) Yankee Station Routine Day

Pilots – Unknown
Co-pilots - Unknown
1st crews – Unknown
2nd crews – Unknown

Additional Data obtained from; Coffelt Database of Vietnam Casualties

C-2A Trader 152796 (Wheelchair 412) VRC-50 (Foo Dogs) USN, Cubi Point NAS

Lt. Herbert Hugh Dilger (KWF) – VRC-50 (26 yrs old)
Lt. Richard Allen Livingstone (KWF) VRC-50 (25 yrs old)
ADJ-3 Paul Kierstead Moser (KWF) VRC-50 (23 yrs old)
ADJ-3 Michael James Tye (KWF) VRC-50 (20 yrs old)
AMS-3 Rayford Jerome Hill (KWF) VRC-50 (21 yrs old)

20 Passengers (KWF)

AME-3 Terry L. Beck age 23 – VF-143
ATR-3 Richard W. Bell age 22 – VF-142
ASE-3 Michael L. Bowman age 20 – VA-27
PN-1 Rolando C. Dayao age 34 - USS Walke (DD-723)
HM-2 Donald C. Dean age 27 – VAW-113
AMH-2 Carl J. Ellerd age 29 – VA-97
AE-2 James J. Fowler age 22 – VF-143
HM-3 Roy G. Fowler age 22 – USS Constellation
YNC Leonardo M. Gan age 40 - USS Walke (DD-723)
MM-1 Paul E. Gore age 29 - USS Constellation
ABH-3 William D. Gorsuch age 21 - USS Constellation
AMS-3 Delvin L. Kohler age 24 – VF-142
AN Howard M. Koslosky age 22 – VF-142
FTM-2 Robert B. Leonard age 23 - USS Constellation
AQB-2 Ronald W. Montgomery age 22 – VF-143
MM-2 William R. Moore age 23 – USS Long Beach
ADJ-2 Kenneth M. Prentice age 23 – VF-142
SD-2 Fidel G. Saiazer age 33 – VAQ-133
DS-3 Keavin L. Terrell age 19 - USS Constellation
TN Reynaldo R. Viado age 24 – USS Hamner (DD-718)

The aircraft carriers in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin were kept supplied with stores and ordnance while at sea by replenishment ships of TF 77. However, aircraft such as the C-1 Trader and the newer C-2 Greyhound were used for flying personnel and mail between ship and shore. Disaster struck on 2 October when a C-2 went missing during a flight from Cubi Point in the Philippines to the *USS Constellation*, which was operating in the Gulf. VRC-50 was a Naval Reserve squadron that was based at Atsugi NAS in Japan with a detachment at Cubi Point and operated a mixed fleet including C-1As, C-2As, CT-39Es and KC-130Fs on transport duties throughout the Western Pacific and Far East area. The 21 passengers were from a variety of units and some were going to be transferred from the *Constellation* to other ships in the Gulf. The aircraft had made contact with the *USS Constellation* and reported that all was normal. The carrier's radar tracked the aircraft until it disappeared from the screen about 10 miles from the ship. Helicopters took off immediately to search the area and a small amount of debris was spotted near an oil slick. The indications were that the aircraft had dived steeply into the sea and disintegrated. The cause of the accident was never established despite a salvage operation that lasted over a month although the most likely cause was thought to be an engine problem. All Navy C-2s were grounded for some time after the crash until modifications to the engine gearbox and mounting structure were made. A location of 70 miles northeast of Dong Hoi is given in one document for the location of the C-2's loss. ⁽⁵⁾

USS Constellation – Deck Log; (course and speed changes omitted) ⁽¹²⁾

07:34 aircraft call sign Wheelchair 412 reported missing, no radar, IFF or communications held with the aircraft. Dispatched A-3 aircraft call sign Electra 610 to investigate last known position. 07:44 received report that A-3 sighted oil slick and dye marker bearing 155° 23 miles from the ship. 07:45 mustered the crew on station: new absentees - none. 07:46 dispatched four helicopters to investigate A-3 report. 07:47 USS John R Craig dispatched by CTG 77.0 to proceed to scene. 07:48 USS Hamner dispatched to proceed to the scene. 07:45 helicopter reported finding debris at 18°54'N, 107°37'E. 08:33 USS John R Craig designated as on scene commander. SAR is in progress. 15:30 SAR operation for C-2 aircraft Wheelchair 412 terminated by CTG 77.0

Letter - Home to parents - provided By: SeaDevil - Ralph Braun 12-30-2006
(portion of - re-typed from original by Ron Milam)

10-8-1969

Dear Mom and Dad;

I got Dad's letter of the 25 September and yours of 1 October. I think some that you may have written may have been lost.

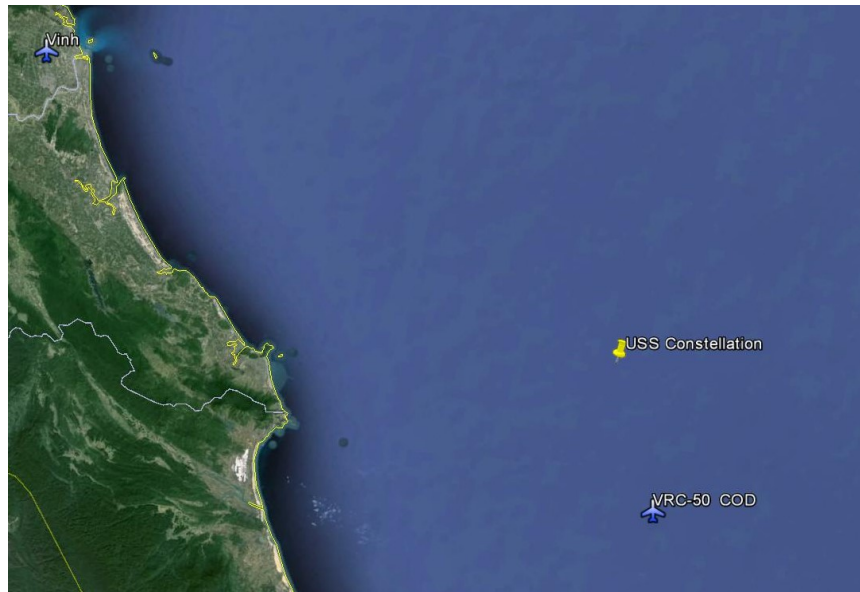
An airplane that carries mail and passengers out to us here on "Yankee Station" went down in the Gulf. I felt very relieved because some of our people could have been on it but luckily weren't. This is our main form of transport back and forth out here and because of this accident; they aren't flying them until they find the trouble. 25 people were in it and when we went to look for possible survivors about 20 minutes later there were only a few bits and pieces left. We flew over and there were so many sharks in the area no one could have lived even if they had made it through the crash. It was rather shocking! The sea was so rough that day I'm sure they couldn't make a decent landing on the water and broke up on contact.

I'm due to be relieved here any day (today is 64 days) and I'll be flying into Danang by helo and catching a transport from there to the Philippines (hopefully I won't have to wait too long for a flight) I'm dying to go in.....

I've dislocated my left wrist in a fall from one of our birds. Man, it's hard enough out here with two hands. Anyway, it is getting better. We are on the USS Hancock again and it is a test of your fortitude to exist on this one. They have no place for us to sleep and the food is worse than garbage (I'm not exaggerating, there is dirt even in the powdered milk, and all they ever serve is noodles and boiled chicken or liver). After 12 hours a person needs sleep and right now we are sleeping right under the catapults and flights start at midnight. At least I got to shave and shower tonight. It's only for a few days I guess since I'm going in. Tomorrow we are going to start sleeping in the brig.

I do believe I'll be here for another year. I don't think there is much chance of our leaving since I guess we are vital, the Navy will be here long after everyone else is gone away.

I've got to go.



- 1) Numbering as per HC-7 Rescue Log (accumulative rescue number)
- 2) HC-7 Rescue Log
- 4) Map – Google Earth
- 5) "Vietnam - Air Losses" By: Chris Hobson (with permission)
- 10) HC-7 History collection; Ron Milam - Historian
- 12) USS Constellation – deck logs

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