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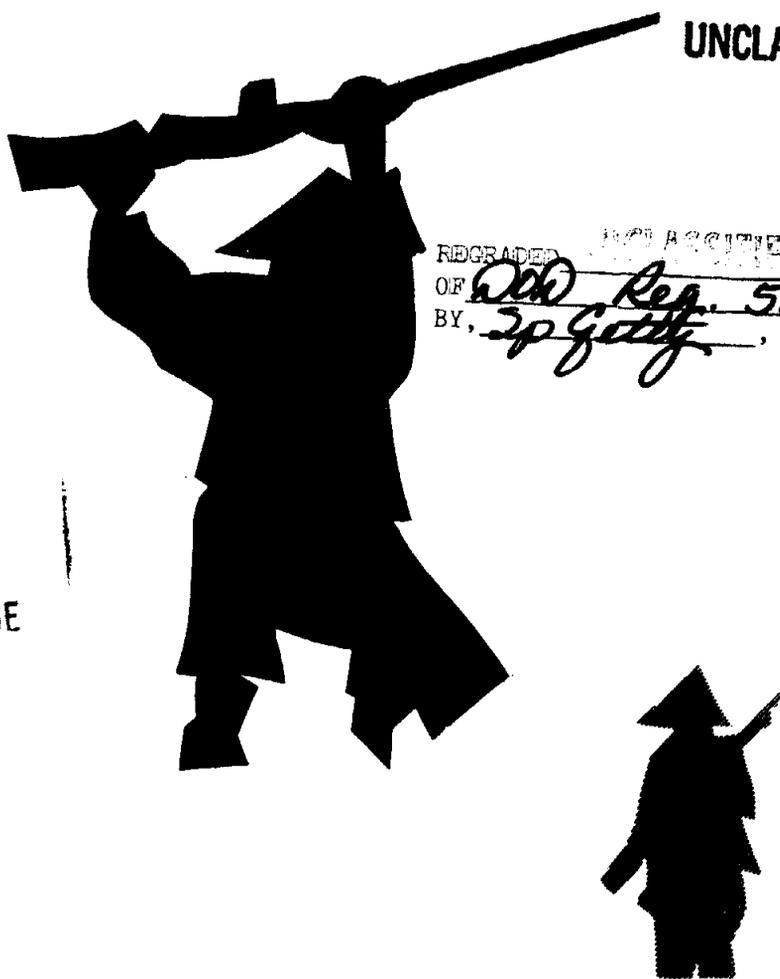
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COUNTERINSURGENCY

LESSONS LEARNED NO. 63

(DJSM-545-66)

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SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS (U)

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HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO San Francisco 96222

25 April 1967

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SUBJECT: Counterinsurgency Lessons Learned No. 63: Search and Rescue Operations (U)

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. (CMHA) INTRODUCTION:

a. From the early days of this conflict, when rescue attempts were often more valiant than organized, the Search and Rescue efforts in Southeast Asia have grown into a large, well-coordinated, disciplined and experienced activity. The men involved in Search and Rescue at every level are professional, experienced men who know what they are doing because they have done it over and over, from the tip of the Ca Mau Peninsula to deep into the Red River Valley of North Vietnam. The organization has been forged into a strong chain whose prime reason for being is to recover downed aircrews, ground troops, seamen or civilians. The weakest link in the chain, however, is the person needing rescue; this is natural, for he is the one person who usually has not had the experience prior to the time he needs it most. It behooves this man to learn his lessons well, and to benefit from the experiences of others. Although this document covers lessons learned for downed airmen of high performance aircraft of friendly services, all personnel, can apply some of the techniques discussed herein, should they become the object of a search and rescue mission.

b. The Search and Rescue (SAR) activities in Southeast Asia (SEA) are under the operational direction of the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group (3d ARRG). Operations are conducted in North and South Vietnam, Gulf of Tonkin, Laos, Thailand and adjacent bodies of water. All services, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Republic of Vietnam Forces and Free World Forces contribute resources and assist in search and rescue missions when required. The central point from which all search and rescue operations are controlled or monitored is the Joint Search and Rescue Center (JSARC) located at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. An extensive control system is in being so that reaction time can be kept to the minimum. This system includes extensive communications equipment; Rescue Control Centers (RCC) at Udorn, Thailand and Da Nang, RVN; precautionary airborne alert aircraft;

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ground alert helicopters; escort aircraft; and many other organic resources and facilities. All are tied together to form a Search and Rescue Task Force.

c. Primary rescue mission aircraft of the Air Force are as follows:

(1) The HH-3E helicopter, call sign "Jolly Green Giant", used for aircrew recovery.

(2) HH-43B and F helicopters, call sign "Pedro", used primarily for local base recovery efforts but sometimes used for aircrew recovery.

(3) HU-16, Albatross, 2 engine prop driven amphibious airplane, call sign "Crown" - A, B, C, etc, used over the Gulf of Tonkin in precautionary orbit for mission control, search, and open sea recovery. (The Airborne Mission Commander operates from this aircraft during rescue efforts).

(4) HC-130, Hercules, large 4 engine turbo prop driven aircraft, call sign "Crown" - 1, 2, 3, etc, used for airborne alert and contains the Airborne Mission Commander.

(5) A-1 fighter aircraft, single prop engine, call sign "Sandy" used for escorting helicopters, searching and fire suppression.

d. The degree of success in rescue operations depends on the area in which an emergency takes place. Chances are best in Thailand because of its friendly environment; the Gulf of Tonkin is next best due to light hostile forces and the excellent SAR coverage provided by the HU-16 amphibious aircraft and Navy forces; and next are safe areas in Laos and isolated areas of South and North Vietnam. The recovery chances in South Vietnam are improving continually due to the increased deployment of friendly forces.

e. Although successful search and rescue is an overall team effort, this issue of lessons learned concentrates on those actions of the downed airman which will enhance his probability of rescue. This is the phase of SAR operations that needs the greatest amount of improvement.

2. (CMHA) TECHNIQUES:

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a. A thorough understanding of basic survival, evasion and rescue techniques is a prerequisite to a successful recovery. Each aircrew member should know his personal equipment thoroughly and above all the downed airman should not panic. His decisions and actions must be based on logic rather than overpowering alarm. One pilot rescued under the most difficult conditions near the top of a canyon by a Jolly Green Giant on the sixth attempt said his specific recommendation to other pilots who may find themselves in a similar situation is to "Keep your head and use common sense".

b. The time to start planning for your recovery is before you begin flying missions in SEA. According to most downed airmen, prior training and briefings on escape, evasion and rescue have aided immeasurably in their recovery. Be prepared for any situation. Every airman should be skilled in the use of each life saving and rescue device at his disposal. In case equipment is lost, alternate courses of action should be adopted. The most valuable single item of equipment in actual usage is the transceiver radio, URC/RT-10. There is no surer way to establish a position than through positive two-way radio contact. Information can be provided by the downed airman as to signaling devices available as well as the extent and position of the enemy threat. In this respect, the survivor has the potential to act as a FAC (Forward Air Controller) for cover aircraft.

c. When an airplane is hit over North Vietnam and the pilot determines the aircraft may become a loss, the aircrew's chances of surviving are increased greatly if they abandon the aircraft over Thailand or the Gulf of Tonkin. Thailand is a friendly area; in the Gulf of Tonkin, although recoveries are often made under hostile fire from the shore and deceptive tactics are sometimes necessary, two major rescue problems are minimized - location and identification of the downed airman. In addition, these recovery environments permit hostile activity to be controlled by suppressive fire or friendly forces. Out of 28 known successful bailouts in the Gulf of Tonkin during a given six months period, only two pilots were not recovered.

d. The following techniques are used to assist in maintaining surveillance over a downed airman:

(1) If good reception is obtained on the frequency being used, it is not necessary to change to the emergency frequency. On occasions, guard channel (emergency frequency) becomes saturated with unnecessary responses. Otherwise, he should switch his IFF (Identifier Friend or Foe) to emergency, advise his crew and wingman of his difficulty, switch his radios to the emergency frequency and

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advise the wingman or other person with whom he is in contact (such as the Crown Airborne Alert Aircraft) of his call sign, nature of emergency, position and intentions. The Crown aircraft will give him instructions within the limits of the emergency. Every attempt will be made to position the aircrew in the most favorable position for recovery. At this point the wingman should squawk IFF emergency; keep the objective in sight; watch for indications of successful bailout (good chute, movements, and signals); select radio frequency and give location and establish communications as directed. In addition, all concerned must utilize discipline in all radio transmissions and pass clear concise information. After the rescue aircraft assumes control, the wingman should stay off the air until called.

(2) If SAR aircraft are not at the scene, it is extremely important that accurate location information be given to the SAR task force by the wingman. Poor location information can cause a lot of confusion and lost time in the search effort. Jungle terrain is dense and makes it difficult to locate a man. The thick foliage limits the range of emergency radios and this requires search aircraft to be in relatively close proximity to pick up a reliable signal. If available, TACAN range and bearing information are valuable; distance and headings from identifiable landmarks are useful also. If the wingman has GCI contact, he can obtain his location from the GCI controller. Experience has shown that doppler and map coordinates are the source of greatest location error. If the wingman can keep his downed airman in sight until the rescue force takes over, this situation is ideal. However, discretion must be used as in one instance a pilot bailed out, had a good chute, a good beeper and satisfactory voice communications. Everything seemed to click into place. But the results were not satisfactory for the first aircraft on the scene continued to circle directly over the downed pilot drawing attention to his exact location. Enemy ground forces in the area closed in on the rescue site. By the time the Jolly Green Giant arrived, so had the VC. If the Sandies (A-1 aircraft) had not been there to neutralize the enemy, a pilot would have been lost. Obviously, the wingman should have kept the downed pilot in sight and orbited nearby or tried to decoy the enemy to another area.

e. Time and visibility permitting an airman, after ejecting, should scan the area for people and the best direction of escape. If a tree landing is imminent, the life preserver (LPU) should be inflated and the survival kit should not be deployed. These actions will provide added protection upon contact with trees and branches.

f. Rigid procedures for the downed airman cannot be set for

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every situation, but there are techniques from actual experience that are of value. Some of these are as follows:

(1) After landing on the ground, the survivor should move away from the immediate area especially from the chute. Move out 50 to 200 yards and hide until assessment has been made of the area and situation. Stay away from people as it is very difficult to identify friend from foe. If apprehended by natives, remain calm and give them a chance to establish their identity.

(2) The downed airman should not try to walk out. Chances are there will be too many people around to avoid contact completely. The SAR Task Force will be searching in the vicinity of the bailout area. Movement on foot through the jungle and hill country of SEA is extremely difficult, even without enemy interference. In the Delta, movement in the daytime is easily detected by the enemy. In many areas flying boots do not provide adequate traction for movement on steep, slick hillsides. One downed pilot in rugged, mountainous terrain stated: "Regulation jump boots, with slick rubber soles, were unacceptable. The climb up the mountainside was much more exhausting than it should have been, and almost resulted in my capture. I needed jungle boots for climbing rocks, on the hard dirt paths, to get a foothold in thickets, on moss and practically everywhere on the trail climbing up the mountain".

(3) The downed airman must use his survival radio judiciously to conserve battery power. If it is necessary to suspend radio transmissions for security or other reasons, time for coming back on the radio must be indicated; i.e., in 15 minutes, 30 minutes, first light or first opportunity.

(4) Just as soon as practical the downed airman should contact his wingman or a SAR aircraft to establish his identity, physical state, location and to obtain necessary instructions. The importance of immediate two-way voice communications with the URC/RT-10 survival radio cannot be overemphasized. In actual recoveries the survivor has assisted the rescue task force by utilization of the radio to state if medical attention is needed, to direct cover aircraft toward enemy positions, to guide the rescue helicopter into his exact position, and to stop hoist operations when he becomes tangled in vines and/or branches. A few techniques for the operation of rescue radio equipment are as follows:

(a) The URT-21 beeper (non voice personal locator beacon) is the best transmitter for rescue aircraft to home in on the

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position of the survivor because of its longer effective range. Although the range of the URC/RT-10 radio is shorter by one third, it is adequate for homing purposes. Since the URT-21 beeper emits an interfering stronger signal than the URC/RT radio, it should be turned off before attempting voice contact with the rescue force.

(b) The ideal position for two-way radio communications is an opening clear of foliage and located on high terrain. When in forest areas the foliage reduces considerably the radio signal to rescue aircraft. All survival radios in use in SEA transmit on line-of-sight only; therefore, for planning purposes, the survivor should not be influenced by the foliage directly overhead but by the foliage in a direct line to the rescue aircraft. If the survivor cannot move from his position, he will have to work under the conditions at hand. If time and circumstances permit, he should move to an area with less growth. The surrounding terrain and altitude of the receiving aircraft determine the possibility and quality of reception. Also operating the equipment in a valley with high, steep mountains on each side severely restricts line-of-sight transmission.

(c) The survival radio has a null (cone of silence) directly above the top of the antenna. Pointing the antenna directly at an aircraft places the aircraft receiver in a cone of silence that prevents reception of tone or voice. When rescue aircraft arrive over the survivor's position, he should move the antenna to a more horizontal rather than a vertical position in relation to the rescue aircraft.

(d) When using the radio identify the recipient aircraft; i.e., "Sandy, you just passed north of my position". There will be several types of aircraft searching, so identify the pertinent aircraft by type or call sign if possible.

(e) The downed airman must remember to retract his radio antenna when moving through the brush, or when landing in trees. There have been several reports of radios not functioning correctly because the antenna was broken in the first few minutes of use.

(5) One of the first things that a downed airman experiences is an extreme desire for water. Virtually every pilot recovered has reported a strong thirst as soon as he was on the ground. An experienced intelligence debriefing officer commented that the need for water is expressed almost universally by downed pilots.

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(a) The importance of water was emphasized by a pilot rescued from the top of a mountain. During his debriefing he made the following comments: "The radio was the most important recovery item, water second, and the third most important thing was physical conditioning. If I had not been in at least acceptable physical condition, had water, and had a cool breeze, I never would have made it to the top of the mountain and been picked up".

(b) A pilot shot down on his 100th mission over Communist territory and on his second recovery experience said, "As mentioned earlier, there should be more water in the kit. Nearly every pilot who does go down experiences severe thirst and this water could be used".

(c) A Captain who ejected out of a burning cockpit made this recommendation: "I recommend taking two water bottles. There is plenty of room in your G-suit; it was an absolute physical necessity and a tremendous morale booster. I could not have made it without water".

(6) Listed below are techniques of signaling during the search phase:

(a) If the downed airman's radio is not operating, his mirror is the preferred second choice. The enemy can see flares and smoke, but the mirror can be focused where desired without attracting attention. If a mirror is not on hand, any object that will glitter or reflect sunlight can be substituted. Finds have been made with the aid of the light from a cigarette lighter.

(b) The Pen-Gun Flare Kit is an effective signaling device if employed properly. However, flares will not penetrate always a thick foliage canopy and should be used in a clearing if possible. Chances of a successful signal can be improved, foliage permitting, by fastening a smoke flare to a parachute shroud line, throwing it over a high limb of a tree, then igniting the flare, and hoisting it back up into the tree.

(c) Firing tracer bullets is a last choice unless used in conjunction with two-way radio communications. Obviously, the rescue forces may think that the tracers are enemy fire if they are not notified. Tracers do have the advantage of penetrating a jungle canopy better than flares or smoke. If tracers must be used as a last resort, the survivor should fire several tracers rapidly and not toward the rescue aircraft.

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(d) Recently, during a successful night rescue mission of three aircrew members, the last person to be retrieved signaled his location by building a grass fire which was seen by the Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopter.

(e) The strobe light produces excellent results at night and especially when an airman is in the water. Like other life saving equipment, the strobe light is useless unless operated properly. The pilot and the navigator involved in the night rescue mentioned above did not gain the benefits of their strobe lights simply because they did not remove the cover over the initiator of the strobe light.

(7) When a HU-16 is approaching an airman downed in the water, the HU-16 will appear as though it will run over the airman. He should not panic, this is intentional. The HU-16 once on the water will approach the airman in the sea from downwind and pass by him. From this point the recovery will be made in one of two ways; as the wing float passes the airman a para-medical secured by a lifeline will enter the water and swim to him; or the aircraft will make a slight "S" turn, and then the props will be reversed or the plane will be allowed to drift back to the airman's position. The exact method will depend on sea state and wind velocity. The survivor must remain in the raft until instructed to leave it as he may not be able to reboard his raft. He should not attempt to swim to the aircraft unless instructed to do so.

3. (CMHA) TACTICAL EXPERIENCES: It would be impossible to select a single rescue mission which would serve as an all purpose example for instructional guidance. Under combat operating conditions in SEA, every search and rescue effort is an emergency and no two missions are identical since search and rescue actions are influenced by many variables - time, place, enemy, friendlies, injuries, etc. Two rescue missions are related below to illustrate certain tactical techniques, one involving the successful recovery of two pilots downed in the sea, and the other a recovery of two pilots downed in the jungle.

a. The first example illustrates recovery procedures used in the Gulf of Tonkin.

(1) The Rescue Crew Commander (RCC) in a HU-16 amphibious aircraft received a May Day call from the wingman of a damaged F-4C. One pilot landed a mile and a half off shore, while the other landed within a half-mile of the coast. The RCC homed on the radio signal of the orbiting wingman and requested that available helicopters and

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RESCAP (Armed Escort Aircraft) be sent to the area.

(2) When the HU-16 arrived, there were small boats converging on the downed pilot who was close to the shore. He was under constant enemy small arms and mortar fire from the beach. The RESCAP, consisting of two Navy A-6's, four Navy A-4's, and two Sandy A-1 aircraft, made firing passes at the small craft and suppressed the hostile gunfire. During the action, the RCC reported that he saw at least one small craft completely destroyed. After taking into account the wind direction and the size and direction of the swells, the RCC landed the HU-16 and taxied a hundred yards to the pilot closest to shore. Because of the hostile fire the pilot had not marked his position with smoke; therefore, the HU-16 was directed by the orbiting wingman. The para-medical entered the water to aid the survivor and they were both retrieved. (Para-medicals are trained as scuba divers, as well as parachutists and medical corpsmen). The RCC taxied a mile out to sea and again ordered the para-medical into the water for the easier pickup of the second pilot. After being on the water approximately five minutes, the RCC took off, away from the beach, with both survivors. The orbiting aircraft reported mortar splashes tracking directly across the wake of the aircraft.

b. The second example describes the recovery of a two man crew of an F-4C who ejected at night (2310 hours local time) over a dense jungle forest in enemy territory.

(1) The pilot, a Lieutenant, noted that he would land in the trees as the full moon lit up the tree tops. He prepared for a tree landing. He went into the trees and stopped abruptly. After stopping, the chute came down to his level and his inflatable raft ended up about a foot away. He was suspended in vines with a tree close by. He hooked a leg over the limb and using one of the longer vines pulled himself onto the limb. He released one riser of his chute and moved to the tree trunk, about eight inches in diameter.

(2) The pilot activated his radio and heard a garbled transmission. He asked for a repeat and again the transmission was not readable. Since there were no planes in the area, he asked: "If this is the Major (the aircraft commander), give me two clicks on the mike button". Two clicks were received. The Lieutenant then heard the RESCAP airplane. He made radio contact, and RESCAP asked if he was OK. He gave his condition and what knowledge he had concerning the other pilot. RESCAP told him that Sandy A-1 aircraft, and a Jolly Green Giant, HH-3 rescue helicopter, would be in at first light and to activate his beeper then. The RESCAP then departed the area at

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approximately 0015 hours local time.

(3) After shutting down his beeper, the Lieutenant tried to get comfortable. He strapped his helmet to the tree limb, put a bandaid on a cut finger, drank some water and was rather comfortable except that the limb he was sitting on was too small. He attempted to rest, sleeping off and on for 30 minute periods.

(4) Later that night, he heard a sound like something falling through the trees perhaps 75 yards away. About 30 minutes later he heard the same sounds again. When daylight came, he saw that he was on the side of a mountain, 2000-3000 feet above the valley floor. Across the valley, the mountains rose 3000-4000 feet. He also spotted the Major's chute about 75 yards to the east. It was about four feet from the top of a tree approximately 45 feet tall.

(5) About 30 minutes after the first light, two Sandies appeared and he activated his beeper. They circled, went away for 20-30 minutes, and finally returned. Voice contact was intermittent. The Lieutenant told the Sandies that because of the fog and overcast they could not get in. The two planes stayed in the area from 0700 to 0935 hours at which time they were relieved by two more Sandies. When the clouds lifted, the Jolly Green Giant came in under the clouds. Finally one of the Sandies flew down his ridge line. He told the Sandy pilot that he had just flown down his ridge line; the Sandy came back down the ridge line. Two pen flares were fired and were seen by the Sandy pilot. The Sandy pilot directed the Jolly Green Giant in. The Lieutenant then fired three more pen flares which were seen by the helicopter. Then he fired a red smoke flare to establish wind direction when the helicopter was closer.

(6) At Jolly Green's direction, the Lieutenant secured himself to the trees and donned his helmet. By means of the radio, he vectored the helicopter to his position. When the forest penetrator was lowered, it was four feet out of reach, so he bent his radio antenna into a hook, snagged the penetrator, and pulled it over to him. After he was securely on the penetrator, he cut himself free from the tree with his hook knife. Shortly thereafter he was safely aboard.

(7) The aircraft commander, although his ejection and tree landing were successful, was not as fortunate. Available information indicates that he elected to descend from the trees during the night by releasing the quick disconnects on his chute harness. Evidently the sounds of movement which the Lieutenant heard the night before were from the Major's dropping through the trees. He sustained

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fatal injuries as a result of his fall.

4. (CMHA) SUMMARY OF SALIENT LESSONS LEARNED:

- a. Chances of rescue due to favorable recovery areas are best in the order of Thailand, Gulf of Tonkin, safe areas in Laos, and isolated areas in South and North Vietnam.
- b. Thorough knowledge of basic survival, evasion and rescue techniques and of the employment of personal life saving equipment by the survivor is essential to a successful recovery.
- c. The downed airman should remain calm, plan his actions and make his decisions based on logic and common sense during the entire rescue operation.
- d. Prior training in survival, evasion and rescue will aid considerably in time of emergency.
- e. If equipment is lost or inoperative, alternate courses of action must be planned.
- f. The most useful piece of equipment in actual rescue operations is the URC/RT-10 radio.
- g. Accurate location information transmitted by other aircraft to the rescue task force eliminates confusion and saves time.
- h. The effects of jungle foliage, mountainous terrain, line-of-sight characteristics, and cone of silence must be considered in the employment of survival radios.
- i. Aircraft should not indicate the position of the survivor by circling directly overhead.
- j. If a tree landing is imminent, inflate the life preserver and do not deploy the survival kit.
- k. After landing, move away from that spot about 50 to 200 yards and hide until an assessment of the situation can be made.
- l. The downed airman should not attempt to walk out because of the terrain, danger of interception by unfriendly forces and search by the rescue force in the bailout area.

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m. Use the longer range URT-21 beeper as the primary means of providing a homing signal for rescue aircraft.

n. Aircrew members should carry an ample water supply as extreme thirst normally is experienced immediately after reaching the ground.

o. The survivor should know all the signaling means available.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

25 April 1967



M. K. WHEELER
CPT, USA
Asst Adj Gen

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20 - CHMAAGCHINA	2 - COMDT, USACMLCS
2 - CHMAAGJAPAN	2 - COMDT, USAOGMS
2 - CHPROVMAAGKOREA	2 - COMDT, USAOC&S
2 - CHMILTAGINDONESIA	2 - COMDT, USAES
2 - CHMEDTBURMA	5 - COMDT, USACGSC
5 - Chief, R&D	5 - COMDT, USARPAC Intel Sch
2 - Chief, ARPA RDFU (THAI)	2 - Supt, USNA
5 - Chief, JUSMAG, PHIL	2 - Supt, USNPGS
2 - JFK Center SW	3 - Supt, USMA
5 - Defense Document Center	2 - Supt, USAFA
2 - CO, NIOTC	5 - USA Sch of Americas
1 - CO, BOATSUPPU ONE	2 - CO, NAVPHIBSCOL CORO
1 - CO, UDT ELEVEN	5 - CO, USNCES Sch
1 - CO, UDT TWELVE	2 - CO, USA Cbt Surv Sch
3 - CO, USA Lim War Lab	3 - CO, USMC Mt Warfare Tng Ctr
3 - CO, Seal Tm 1	1 - CO, USNOTS
3 - CO, Seal Tm 2	5 - MAI
1 - PAC Msl Range	1 - HQ Foreign Tech Dir, AFSC
1 - NAV Ops Spt Gp LANT	2 - HQ APGC (PGFS)
7 - COMRIVFLOT ONE	5 - PACAF (IGSL)
6 - COMCOSRON ONE	5 - USAF (AFIGSL-4)
5 - COMRIVRON FIVE	5 - Dept Air Police Tng
2 - COM NAV Ops Spt Gp PACAF	1 - Dir, US Air Univ Library
1 - COM NAV Const Bn LANT	1 - Dir, Special Air Warfare Sch
2 - COMDT, NWC	1 - DIA (DIAAP-10A2)
5 - COMDT, AFSC	
2 - COMDT, ICAF	
5 - COMDT, USAWC	

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