

Chapter 12 Miami Beach

We have a mission, a Huey down near Miami Beach. Miami Beach is a staging point along the beach about 45 minutes south of Qui Nhon close to highway 1. The Huey went down due to an oil pressure problem. The crew hitched a ride back to Lane and left a ROK gun truck on the highway to guard it. A gun truck is an innovation to help guard convoys. Take a deuce and a half truck, put a bunch of sand bags on the bed to stop incoming bullets, then add a quad 50 cal gun mount, and you have some mobile firepower to contend with.

We suspect we may be able to fly it back, so we take an extra pilot and an engine man. The entire area is hot, but there is no action at the moment. Cpt. Powell is orbiting ahead with an AH1G cobra. We arrive on site just north of a river, east of the highway and leave our engine running while the engine man and Festus (1Lt Trumbo) hop out and run over to the Huey. The engine man lifted the cowl, checked the oil level and looked for obvious leaks or other problems.

Festus engaged the starter and the rotor started turning. About then, all hell broke loose. We start taking well aimed mortars like crazy. The engine man came running and jumped on Snow Snake as we pulled pitch. Just as we were lifting off, a mortar landed right behind us. We were already nose down, and it nearly drove us into the dirt. Almost at the same time, another round hit right in front of the chin bubble of the Huey we were picking up. It blew out the chin bubble and injured Festus's foot. He came barreling out of the door just as we were lifting off.

We were pointing south, and the logical place for mortars to come from was the hills just to the north. Neither Rick nor I had a line to shoot north and we held our fire, but the gun truck opened up, and Cpt. Powell did a pedal turn on his Cobra and ripple fired rockets into the hillside to the north.



We had already lifted off when Festus bailed out, and I yelled to Cpt Baxter that Festus was on the ground, running our direction on one foot. We turned around and headed back to pick him up, and got the heck out of there.

We flew to Miami Beach and Festus got a ride to get some medical treatment. He stayed in country, but was off flying status for a while.



For the rest of the morning we re-armed cobras. They called in air strikes as well. When we left, the engine was still running on the Huey. We relayed instructions to the Koreans how to shut it off. When we came back the next day, the area was a lot quieter.



We had reports of NVA literally nailed to trees by the flechettes from the flechette rockets. There were several types of rockets carried by the Cobras. One was the high explosive (HE) round which exploded on contact, and the other used against personnel was the flechette rocket. The 2.75" flechette rocket contained 2200 1 inch long flechettes that were expelled from the rocket tube when the rocket motor

burned out. You would see the initial rocket burn for a few seconds, and then a red cloud as the charge blew out the flechettes.

Another rocket used was the white phosphorous (willy pete) used to mark a location or start fires.

Rick got a purple heart for a shrapnel wound caused when the mortar landed right behind us. Snow Snake also got a few new holes.