



GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Good Hit – Wrong Ship

Two eager A-7E *Corsair* pilots were scheduled for a day visual, overwater bombing mission. The target was a Mk 35 SEPTAR (seaborne powered target) vessel in the offshore warning area. Mission brief included weapons delivery procedures, inertial navigation target location, target vessel photos, and range safety procedures.

Range control advised that a deep submergence support vessel was operating approximately 10 miles south of the target vessel. When cleared onto the target, the flight made a low-altitude identification pass and observed the SEPTAR vessel dead in the water. The flight then flew three 45-degree dive runs.

After these were completed, the flight leader established the pattern for low-altitude pop-up deliveries. Executing run-in at 200 feet to the target, the leader acquired a radar lock-on at six miles, which correlated visually with the vessel believed to be the target.

At three miles from the target, the lead pilot executed a pop-up maneuver, rolled ahead, and delivered one Mk 76 practice bomb from 600 feet altitude in a 10-degree dive. As the pilot pulled off, the range control officer advised the flight that they appeared to be over the support vessel instead of the SEPTAR. The flight leader immediately called "cease fire," regrouped his flight, and assessed the situation. Range control advised him that the deep submergence support vessel had incurred a direct hit amidsthips during his last bombing run.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy sufferin' SEPTARS! Some days you just can't win. Up to this



point these gents had planned and executed a most professional flight and scored a nice hit. Unfortunately, it was on the wrong target.

The similar profile of the SEPTAR and the support vessel at low altitude, preoccupation with weapons delivery procedures, and failure to achieve a computer mark-on-top following the last high-angle delivery were factors which contributed to the flight leader mistaking the support vessel as the target vehicle.

Although not excusable, old Gramps knows for certain that far more than one stalwart aviator has been "red-faced" by a run or delivery on the wrong target, particularly overwater. I feel certain this flight leader will be more alert in the future.

Since this mission was the wingman's introduction to overwater weapons delivery, I'm certain he learned at least two things: 1) this stuff ain't so danged easy if a pro like his leader could err, and 2) it ain't too cool for the "wingy" to blindly follow the leader around the pattern and wind up in the same (but wrong) boat.

Had this been a live weapon the deep submergence support vessel may have been deeply submerged for real. Fortunately, no one was injured. When the irate crew of the bombed support vessel returned ashore, they found that the now wiser wingman had followed his also wiser leader to the other coast on a critical cross-country survival training mission.

Some pop-up!





Shroud-Bound Swimmers

This F-4 was the second aircraft in a two-plane section scheduled for a day CAP mission. The aircraft was spotted on catapult #2 and ready for launch. The hookup, nose-gear extension, and tension were routine. The acceleration to military power and transition to afterburner were smooth. Everything normal, the F-4 was launched.

After one-third catapult travel, the bridle parted. As the F-4 decelerated, the shuttle passed under the aircraft. A blossoming of the starboard engine afterburner plume signaled that the engine had been fodded.

Immediately realizing that aircraft end-speed would be insufficient, the crew ejected. The RIO departed the F-4 shortly after the aircraft cleared the bow. The pilot was unable to get out before the aircraft was below flight deck level. Both landed within 10 feet of each other at approximately 150 feet from the starboard side of the ship. Both crewmen used IRSOK (inflate raft, snap oxygen Koch) as a memory aid for the survival procedure. Each was able to release the right Koch fitting on water entry but both had difficulty releasing the left.

The RIO inflated the left side of his LPA, released his oxygen mask, and removed the shroud lines around his

neck. He then became aware of the lines entangling his legs and became very concerned. He jettisoned his seat pan, forced himself to remain calm and continued the effort to free himself. He felt pressure around his right ankle and was then pulled under water. After several sharp kicks, he managed to free himself from the shroud lines and bobbed frantically to the surface.

The pilot had removed his oxygen mask and was attempting, with little success, to free himself from the shroud lines. Realizing that they were entangled around the seat pan, he removed the seat pan right side fitting, then the left and pulled it out in front of him, which provided enough slack to free his legs. He tried to inflate the raft but it was too entangled. He then discarded the seat pan and found himself free.

Both men freed themselves about the same time, swam toward each other, and were recovered promptly by a Coast Guard motor whaleboat without further mishap.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy sufferin' submersion! There is nothing like a nice midday dip in the drink, but we'd all prefer it not to occur in the middle of a catapult

stroke.

These crewmen owe their lives to timely diagnosis and reaction to a catastrophic situation requiring the ultimate in crew coordination. It appears that they were well trained and had prepared for such an emergency with IRSOK. The pilot remembers hanging in a cocked position during his short chute ride because of the shroud lines around the seat pan. He lost no time in attempting to free himself as soon as he hit the water.

The professional and prompt pick-up by the Coast Guard crew was superb and I'm sure most appreciated by this crew, particularly since no SAR helo was available.

These two fortunate gents were successful in untangling themselves where far too many aircrewmembers have not fared so well. We owe our aircrews every possible survival advantage including that following successful ejection.

Gramps is advised that the parachute systems department at the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, is currently conducting a parachute entanglement avoidance technique test program, evaluating procedures to counter this water survival hazard. Test results will be included in the Naval Aviation water survival training program by early next year. Hurry it up, gents, we're bound in shrouds!