

# U.S. Flyer Excels At Hitting Bunkers With Grenades

DANANG (UPI)—Walter Durlin looks like a football player but instead of a pigskin he threads the needle with a fragmentation grenade.

Durlin, his feet dangling from the open door of an OH-6 Loach observation helicopter, drops hand grenades in Viet cong bunkers from about 30 feet off the ground.

Both Durlin and his pilot, CWO John Robinson, are expert at spotting bunkers: It's their job and they do it with polished professionalism and well-rehearsed teamwork.

Robinson and Durlin were flying the "Last Light" mission—a final before-dark sweep of the area around Danang airbase to make sure the Communists have not set up any rockets to fire at the base after sunset.

The Loach, a small helicopter designed for close work, skimmed across the marshland south of Danang at speeds up to 80 miles per hour. When they spotted a suspicious area they circled and bombarded it with hand grenades.

The usual tipoff for a bunker is a small grass shack—a hootch usually hidden deep in a clump of banana trees or small shrubs.

Not long after taking off, they spotted a small hootch buried in vegetation.

"Let's burn some of that off," said Durlin, tossing an incendiary flare that set fire to the grass. Then they spotted the hootch and the bunker.

"There it is," Robinson said, pointing out the bunker. "It's up behind it (the hootch)."

"It's the only place it can be and I don't think I'd live in a house without a bunker down here in the high-risk district," Durlin said.

"It's a hucie. It's got a walk-in door on it," he said. "He's got clothes hanging in the doorway."

Durlin and Robinson made a number of passes at the bunker, sometimes slowing to as little as 25 miles an hour directly over the hole leading to the bunker while Durlin tossed in a grenade.

Finally, satisfied they had destroyed the position, they moved on to search for and destroy another.

Although they met no resistance, the Communists frequently shoot back.

Earlier in the day, they were flying a similar mission about 25 miles south of Danang deep into Communist territory.

While they were skimming over recently tilled fields, Robinson reported sighting a large group of civilians. A few seconds later someone opened fire on the helicopter with an AK-47 and "some kind of machine gun."

"Taking fire, taking fire, taking fire . . ." Robinson said, dodging with the small craft. Almost immediately a second helicopter—a deadly Cobra gunship—came in to help, blasting the site where the gunfire originated. "That takes care of the civilians," said the Cobra pilot, indicating the "civilians" were Communist troops.

Nearby the helicopter team discovered a Communist 130-MM artillery piece—one of the deadliest weapons in the North Vietnamese arsenal. Robinson and the Cobra dropped everything they had on the gun, but four fighter-bombers had to be called in to finish the job with more powerful explosives.