

datum-marker buoy (DMB) to get drift information, which would help us if we needed follow-on searches. Also, our search radar was intermittent, operating only five to 10 percent of the time. The loss of radar would hurt our chances for success. The navigator and avionics-man worked hard to get the radar up; they kept resetting the equipment and occasionally would get a few minutes of active radar searching.

We completed the original search area, then we checked the perimeter of Fanning Island as planned. We completed the trackline search out to 60 miles, guessing the direction a drifting kayak would travel. As it got dark, we rushed to begin our second search area; we were running out of time to find the kayaker. Another night adrift would result in a larger search area the next day. More importantly, it meant the kayaker would spend another day exposed to the elements, perhaps without food or water.

During the second search, we discussed that we had only five minutes remaining (one more 10-mile leg) before we would have to depart because of darkness. On the last leg, the radar came up for a few minutes, and the navigator saw a small blip. He gave us a steer of 330 degrees at seven miles. As we made a 90-degree turn toward the contact, the radar again failed. We continued to the target, and as we approached, my copilot, Lt. Chris Shivery, yelled out, "There he is; he's flashing a light."

As I flew over, I could see the faint outline of the kayak and the man on board. He had drifted 70 miles from Fanning Island. Unfortunately, we couldn't see him or the kayak when we again passed over him a few minutes later because darkness had set in.

We immediately prepared to drop a radio to the kayaker; I hoped to have

some horizon available during the drop run. We normally drop rescue equipment from an altitude of 200 feet at 130 knots. Flying the aircraft that low in inky-black instrument conditions is much harder than completing the maneuver in daylight visual conditions.

We worked fast, but the droppable radio didn't work. We then decided to drop an MA-1 survival kit, which included a raft. The raft would provide a safe place if the kayak overturned or sank, and it was equipped with a survival radio. We made the drop a few minutes later but, because of darkness, could not tell if it was close to the kayak.

We contacted RCC and relayed the latest information. RCC located an automated mutual-assistance vessel-rescue-system vessel (AMVER)—a large cargo ship—approximately 100 miles away and diverted it to the scene. The RCC also said there was a tugboat in our area, the Tender II. We dropped another DMB in the position of the kayaker and departed the scene to locate the Tender II, which was about 15 miles away. We spoke with the skipper of the tugboat, relayed the situation, and requested that he divert to pick up the kayaker. He said he was low on fuel, had poor navigation equipment, and would have a hard time locating the kayak; however, he agreed to help. We also kept the AMVER vessel en route, in case the Tender II could not locate the kayaker. We gave the tugboat skipper the kayak's position.

We heard intermittent audio and beacon



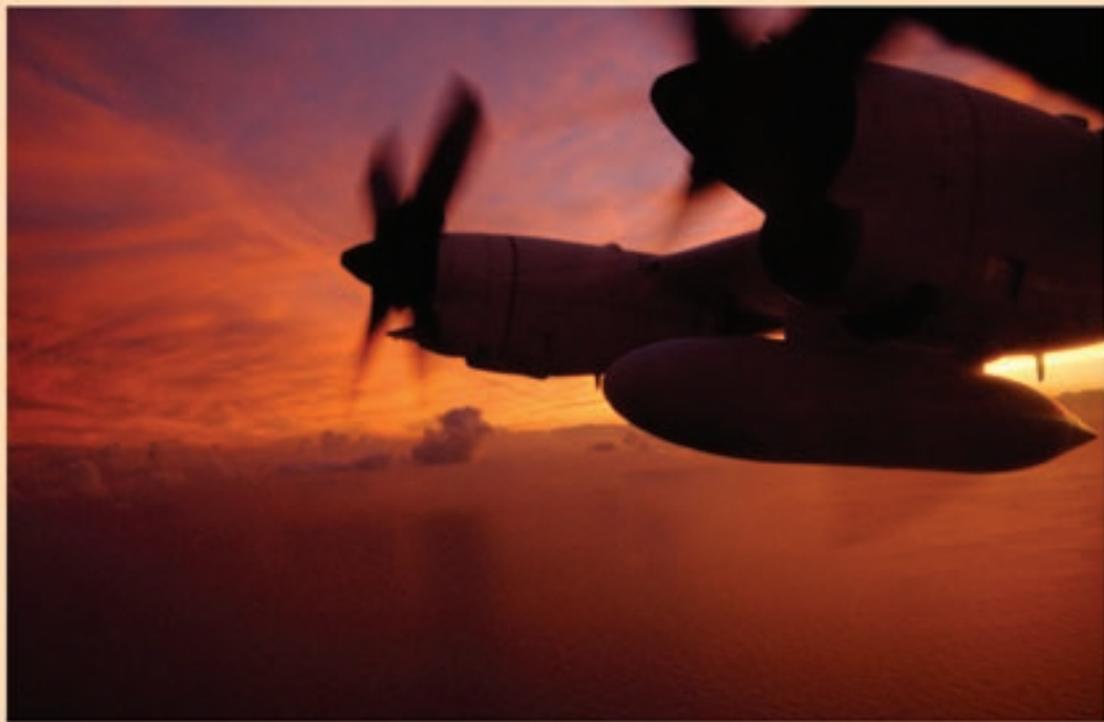
transmissions from the radio we had dropped in the life raft. The signals were unreadable. We tried to contact him, but he couldn't operate the distress radio.

As we orbited, we dropped illumination flares to provide a visual reference for the life raft. Within an hour, the tugboat was in a position where we could see it and the flares at the same time. We dropped more flares to vector the tugboat to the raft. We didn't know it, but the kayaker had abandoned his kayak and boarded the life raft after our aerial delivery. As the tugboat got closer, we kept providing steering information. We also continued orbiting and illuminating the water with our landing lights as the tugboat arrived. Fortunately, the tugboat located the man in the raft and brought him and the raft on board. The kayaker was safe—a great outcome to a difficult search.

We released the AMVER vessel and obtained needed information from the tugboat. As we departed for Christmas Island, the tugboat skipper said if we had not remained on-scene to vector him, it would have been impossible to locate the raft.

We relayed the information to RCC as we approached eight hours into the flight. We were unable to tune and to identify the Christmas Island non-directional beacon (NDB), the only navigational aid at the airport and the only legal means of shooting an instrument approach to the field. We were unable to contact Christmas personnel until we were about 50 miles out; the time was 2330.

At 10 miles out, we spoke to someone at the field, which is located in a remote portion of the island. He told us there was no lighting at the airport, including runway lighting and other lights in the small shack next to the runway. Then he told us the non-directional-beacon antenna had blown down during a recent storm. The CG1713 flight deck got very quiet. We would have to identify the field and land without navigational aids or any surface lighting. We were flying an



approach to a black hole, in the rain, with a cloud deck at 700 feet, and no navigational aids. We explained we would be unable to land if they did not mark the airport in some way.

Christmas told us they had two old firetrucks parked at the end of the runway, and the headlights were pointed down the runway. The weather was not good. As we crossed over the island, I was in and out of clouds and rain. I saw very little light on the island but absolutely nothing at the field. I was concerned as we circled the island with our landing lights out, searching for the taillights of the two trucks. We were trying to make an approach and land, in marginal weather, to a field we could not identify. I had no options to divert to another field. One way or another, we were going to land at Christmas Island.

On the first pass, we didn't see the airport or any sign of the trucks. As we did a go-around at 400 feet, we reentered the clouds and tried to turn to a reciprocal heading of 270 from the runway heading; the flight deck was busy. My crew did everything possible to help me find the runway. My copilot called out altitude and airspeed, the navigator changed our GPS (uncertified for approaches) to provide a 090 course to the runway heading. The avionicsman told RCC he couldn't talk at that moment because we were busy trying to find the airport and land the airplane. The crew in the back of the aircraft was cinching down their safety belts and shoulder harnesses.