

While climbing during day VFR pattern work at NAF Atsugi, Japan, Lt. Oliver Stormer, the pilot at the controls, felt the port power lever vibrate and the aircraft swerve to the left. The copilot and aircraft commander, LCdr. Paul Crump, saw the port fuel flow and IHP fluctuate erratically. Lt. Stormer immediately executed emergency procedures for RPM/IHP/TMT/fuel-flow fluctuations, but the indications, vibration and noticeable swerve, persisted.

With the port power level at flight idle, the port engine showed minus 40 indicated-shaft horsepower. Unable to control the engine HP/RPM or propeller-blade angle, LCdr. Crump had Lt. Stormer secure the port engine and feather the propeller.

LCdr. Crump declared an emergency with tower and requested the short-field-arresting gear be rigged. As the pilots were dealing with the malfunctioning engine/propeller, the mission commander, Lt. Kaz Hashigami, backed them up by reviewing the pocket checklist emergency procedures. He also told other area aircraft the runway at Atsugi would be fouled following the field arrestment.

With Lt. Ben Finney in the LSO shack providing glideslope assistance, Lt. Stormer flew a single-engine approach with crosswinds (21 knots) at the edge of NATOPS limits to a successful field arrestment.

# BRAVO Zulu



Left to right: Lt. Kaz Hashigami, LCdr. Paul Crump, Lt. Ollie Stormer, and Lt. Ben Finney.

The crew of Unsung 27, assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462, was the lead aircraft in a section of two CH-53E helos. They launched from Ali Al Salem, Kuwait, at 2300 on a low-light-level, night-combat mission, using night-vision devices (NVDs). Their task was to resupply a forward arming and refueling point (FARP) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The helicopter aircraft commander (HAC) used his external cargo hook to pick up a bundle of three fuel bladders, weighing 10,500 pounds, and led the section of two helos into Iraq. The automatic-flight-control system (AFCS) failed 30 minutes into the flight and 90 miles from Ali Al Salem. The aircraft oscillated, and the load started to swing, which caused the aircraft to become unstable. Despite a missile threat in the area, the pilots were forced to climb. The HAC struggled to bring the aircraft under control while he dealt with spatial disorientation induced by the lack of visible horizon and the swinging load. The desert terrain provided no horizon as a reference. The HAC relied solely on the instruments to react to the oscillating load.

The crew considered jettisoning the fuel bladders to regain control of the aircraft. As the HAC worked the flight controls, the copilot focused on the AFCS failure. Meanwhile the crew chiefs monitored the fuel bladders and provided a verbal description of the swinging load. The crew chief's role was crucial as the pilots struggled to get the aircraft under control. The excellent work of the crew, combined with the HAC's NVG flying experience, brought the aircraft under control, narrowly avoiding a crash.

With limited visibility and without AFCS, the aircrew flew 90 miles back to Ali Al Salem while fighting aircraft-control problems and spatial disorientation. The crew dropped off the fuel bladders, landed, shut down, and signed out a different aircraft. They then picked up the bladders and completed the mission, returning to base at 0700.



Left to right: Capt. Robert M. Rich (copilot), Cpl. Michael J. Sablar (crew chief), SSgt. Michael J. Brady (crew chief), HM2 Robert H. Davenport (gunner-observer), Capt. Andrew F. Byrd (HAC).