

The Odyssey: Strafed In A Jungle Shootout
by [Clifford J. Morley](#)

I am getting too short for this shit! On September 2, 1970, I was the Flight Engineer on C/228th ASHB 1st Cav Div Hook #67-18479 which was named the "Odyssey". I remember the faces of the crew but not their names. The day began routine enough flying missions to LZ's and hauling the standard stuff. It was raining and the ceiling was intermittently at ground level. We were operating in an area east of Phuoc Vinh not far from the coast. The Odyssey was flying low level, thundering over the jungle at 100 plus knots as fast as a Chinook can go. We were so close to the treetops that we left a wake of debris flying behind us.

Fog and mist was seeping out of the dense triple canopy jungle and low lying clouds were all around us. I was sitting on my chest protector by the cargo hook hatch, both gunners were standing at the ready and they had their chest protectors on as did the pilots. We were heading for an LZ not far away to pick up another load and broke out over a large clearing where the trees were less dense when all hell broke loose.

The left gunner who was an ex-grunt, began firing and then the right gunner opened up. Bullets were ripping through the aircraft as it was being strafed by enemy AK47 automatic weapons armor piercing rounds and the full metal jackets were pinging and bouncing around inside the ship. The aircraft momentarily nose dived but the Aircraft Commander quickly regained control and we flew on to the LZ and landed.

A damage assessment determined that the Odyssey had taken ten hits from the cockpit to the rear. The first round struck the flight controls under the AC's seat which broke off a piece of one of the links. That explained the brief nose dive. Several rounds struck in the area of the SAS system and radio closet but no loss of hydraulics or flight controls. The left gunner took a hit to the left edge of his chest protector which had grazed and tore out about a four inch long narrow chunk of his hide. He insisted that he did not require medical attention and he meant it. One tough ex-grunt! About four rounds struck the lower part of the left fuel pod and came out on the right at the window level. Several rounds went through the ramp area but no vital components were damaged. One round had missed my head by about an inch.

Apparently, flying so low and fast over the jungle treetops, we had caught the enemy by surprise. The left gunner sighted a group of NVA regulars in the clearing and had immediately opened fire, killing six of them as they returned fire on us. The six kills were later confirmed. The right gunner opened fire on movement and suppression. I determined that it was safe to fly the Odyssey back to Camp Gorvad Phuoc Vinh and the Aircraft Commander agreed. I kept one of the full metal jackets lying around on the floor and have it to this day.

My thanks to Jim Ketchum for providing a copy of the Army Combat Incident report which confirmed the date of the action and the ten hits.

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