

From Wikipedia

Flight of Deep Sea 129

Beggar Shadow mission

At 07:00 local time of Tuesday, 15 April 1969, an EC-121M of the U.S. Navy's Fleet Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron One ([VQ-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VQ-1)) took off from [NAS Atsugi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NAS_Atsugi), [Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan), on an intelligence-gathering reconnaissance mission.[2] The aircraft, Bureau number 135749, c/n 4316,[ bore the tail code "PR-21" and used the radio call sign Deep Sea 129. Aboard were 8 officers and 23 enlisted men under the command of [LCDR](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lieutenant_commander) James Overstreet. Nine of the crew, including one [Marine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Marine_Corps) [NCO](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-commissioned_officer), were Naval Security Group cryptologic technicians (CTs) and linguists in Russian and Korean.

Deep Sea 129's assigned task was a routine Beggar Shadow signal intelligence ([SIGINT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SIGINT)) collection mission. Its flight profile northwest over the [Sea of Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Japan) took it to an area offshore of [Musu Point](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kilchu), where the EC-121M would turn northeast toward the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) and orbit along a 120-nautical-mile (222 km) long elliptical track. These missions, while nominally under the command of [Seventh Fleet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh_Fleet) and [CINCPAC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CINCPAC), were actually controlled operationally by the Naval Security Group detachment at [NSF Kamiseya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naval_Support_Facility_Kamiseya), Japan, under the direction of the [National Security Agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Agency).

LCDR Overstreet's orders included a prohibition from approaching closer than 50 nautical miles (90 km) to the North Korean coast. VQ-1 had flown the route and orbit for two years, and the mission had been graded as being of "minimal risk." During the first three months of 1969 nearly 200 similar missions had been flown by both Navy and U.S. Air Force reconnaissance aircraft off North Korea's east coast without incident.

The mission was tracked by a series of security agencies within the [Department of Defense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Defense) that were pre-briefed on the mission, including land-based Air Force radars in Japan and South Korea. The USAF 6918th Security Squadron at [Hakata Air Station](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hakata-ku,_Fukuoka), [Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan), USAF 6988th Security Squadron at [Yokota Air Base](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yokota_Air_Base), [Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan),and Detachment 1, 6922nd Security Wing at Osan Air Base monitored the North Korean reaction by intercepting its air defense search radar transmissions. The [Army Security Agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_Security_Agency) communications interception station at Osan listened to North Korean air defense radio traffic, and the Naval Security Group at Kamiseya, which provided the seven of the nine CTs aboard Deep Sea 129, also intercepted [Soviet Air Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Air_Force) search radars.

Interception and shootdown]

At 12:34 local time, roughly six hours into the mission, the Army Security Agency and radars in Korea detected the takeoff of two [North Korean Air Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korean_Air_Force) [MiG-17s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MiG-17) and tracked them, assuming that they were responding in some fashion to the mission of Deep Sea 129.[4] In the meantime the EC-121 filed a scheduled activity report by radio on time at 13:00 and did not indicate anything out of the ordinary. Twenty-two minutes later the radars lost the picture of the MiGs and did not reacquire it until 13:37, closing with Deep Sea 129 for a probable intercept.

The communications that this activity generated within the National Security network was monitored by the EC-121's parent unit, VQ-1, which at 13:44 sent Deep Sea 129 a "Condition 3" alert by radio, indicating it might be under attack. LCDR Overstreet acknowledged the warning and complied with procedures to abort the mission and return to base. At 13:47 the radar tracks of the MiGs merged with that of Deep Sea 129, which disappeared from the radar picture two minutes later.

Initial reaction

At first none of the agencies were alarmed, since procedures also dictated that the EC-121 rapidly descend below radar coverage, and Overstreet had not transmitted that he was under attack. When it did not reappear within ten minutes, however, VQ-1 requested a scramble of two Air Force [Convair F-106 Delta Dart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convair_F-106_Delta_Dart) interceptors to provide [combat air patrol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combat_air_patrol) for the EC-121.

By 14:20 the Army Security Agency post had become increasingly concerned. It first sent a FLASH message (a high priority intelligence message to be actioned within six minutes) indicating that Deep Sea 129 had disappeared, and then at 14:44, an hour after the shoot-down, sent a CRITIC ("critical intelligence") message (the highest message priority, to be processed and sent within two minutes) to six addressees within the [National Command Authority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Command_Authority), including [President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States) [Richard M. Nixon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_M._Nixon) and [National Security Advisor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Advisor_(United_States)) [Henry Kissinger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Kissinger).

14-APR-69

SQUADRON: FLEET AIRBORNE RECONNAISSANCE SQDN ONE (VQ-1)

AIRCRAFT: EC-121M, BuNo 135749, PR-21, "DeepSea Two One"

LOCATION: SE of Chongjin, North Korea.

 EVENT: Shot down by two North Korean MIG fighters over the Sea of Japan.

 LOSS: 31 of 31-man crew killed:

Marshall H McNamara, ADRC

Timothy H McNeil, ATR2

John A Miller, CT3

John H Potts, CT1

Richard T Prindle, AMS3

Richard E Smith, CTC

Philip D Sundby, CT3

Richard E Sweeney, AT1

Stephen J Tesmer, CT2

David M Willis, ATN3

Hugh M Lynch, SSGT, USMC

Frederick A. Randall, CTC

James Leroy Roach, AT1

LCDR James H Overstreet

LT John N Dzema

LT Dennis B Gleason

LT Peter P Perrottey

LT John H Singer

LT Robert F Taylor

LTJG Joseph R Ribar

LTJG Robert J Sykora

LTJG Norman E. Wilkerson

Louis F Balderman, ADR2

Stephen C Chartier, AT1

Bernie J Colgin, AT1

Ballard F Connors, Jr, ADR1

Gary R DuCharme, CT3

Gene K Graham, ATN3

LaVerne A Greiner, AEC

Dennis J Horrigan, ATR2

Richard H Kincaid, ATN2

















