

BEYER, THOMAS JOHN

Name: Thomas John Beyer
Rank/Branch: Major/US Air Force
Unit: 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron
DaNang Air Base, South Vietnam
Date of Birth: 10 March 1941 (Fargo, ND)
Home of Record: Fargo, ND
Date of Loss: 30 July 1969
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: [152800N 1075800E \(ZC195125\)](#)
[Click coordinates to view maps](#)
Status in 1973: Missing In Action
Category: 3
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: [O2A "Skymaster"](#)
Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)



REMARKS:

SYNOPSIS: The Cessna O2 Skymaster was the military version of the civilian Model 335 Skymaster. The twin-engine, twin-tailboom O2 had greater endurance and a little more speed than the more familiar O1 Bird Dog, but still remained essentially unarmed carrying only smoke rockets. Like its predecessor, the low flying, slow moving Skymaster was used primarily as a Forward Air Control (FAC) aircraft to mark targets for both attack aircraft and ground troops.

At 1220 hours on 30 July 1968, then Captain Thomas J. Beyer was the pilot of an O2A Skymaster (tail # 68-68891) departed Chu Lai Airbase, Republic of Vietnam on a visual reconnaissance mission as a Forward Air Controller (FAC). His area of operation included the "Pocahontas Forest," Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam. Capt. Beyer's call sign was "Helix 15" on mission identification #5096, and was flying in support of the US Army's Americal Division that was operating in this area.

The weather conditions in the morning consisted of an overcast of clouds with a ceiling of 5,000 feet and visibility of 7 miles. At times scattered rain showers restricted that visibility. By the afternoon the weather conditions changed to scattered clouds with a ceiling of 10,000 feet, visibility of 4 miles in haze and ground fog and continuing scattered rain showers.

At 1345 hours, the last radio transmission was received when Capt. Beyer stated he had not seen any enemy activity in the area he had been working. He further stated "he was heading toward Kham Duc to work with 'Renegade Delta' and would call back in 30 to 40 minutes." At the time of this transmission, the location of the Skymaster would place him approximately 32 miles west of DaNang, 39 miles west-northwest of Chu Lai and proceeding to a point 20 miles west toward Kham Duc on a heading of 200 degrees. Further, he gave no indication that he was experiencing any difficulty. The terrain in this area is mostly coastal plains with hills covered in triple canopy jungle.

Tom Beyer was scheduled to return to Chu Lai at 1500 hours. When he had not arrived by 1545 hours, Helix radio, the air traffic control ground center became concerned that Helix 15 was overdue and immediately initiated an electronic search. An extensive search and rescue operation was also initiated at this time and continued through 4 August 1968. A Crown command and control aircraft reported he heard

an emergency beeper signal emitting from this area which was known as a Viet Cong (VC) stronghold. Unfortunately, Crown was unable to establish voice communication with the downed pilot.

In questioning the US ground personnel who Capt. Beyer was flying in support of, a ground team reported that his aircraft had flown over them heading west, and that after his aircraft was out of sight, they heard an explosion which they believed was his aircraft. The location of this explosion was approximately 20 kilometers (12 miles) east of Kham Duc, Phuoc Son District, Quang Nam-Quang Tri Province. No other beeper signals were heard by search and rescue (SAR) personnel, and no trace of the missing aircraft or its pilot were found. At the time formal SAR efforts were terminated, Thomas Beyer was listed Missing in Action.

Since the end of the Vietnam War well over 21,000 reports of American prisoners, missing and otherwise unaccounted for have been received by our government. Many of these reports document LIVE American Prisoners of War remaining captive throughout Southeast Asia TODAY.

Pilots in Vietnam were called upon to fly in many dangerous circumstances, and each was prepared to be wounded, killed or captured. It probably never occurred to them that they could be abandoned by the country so