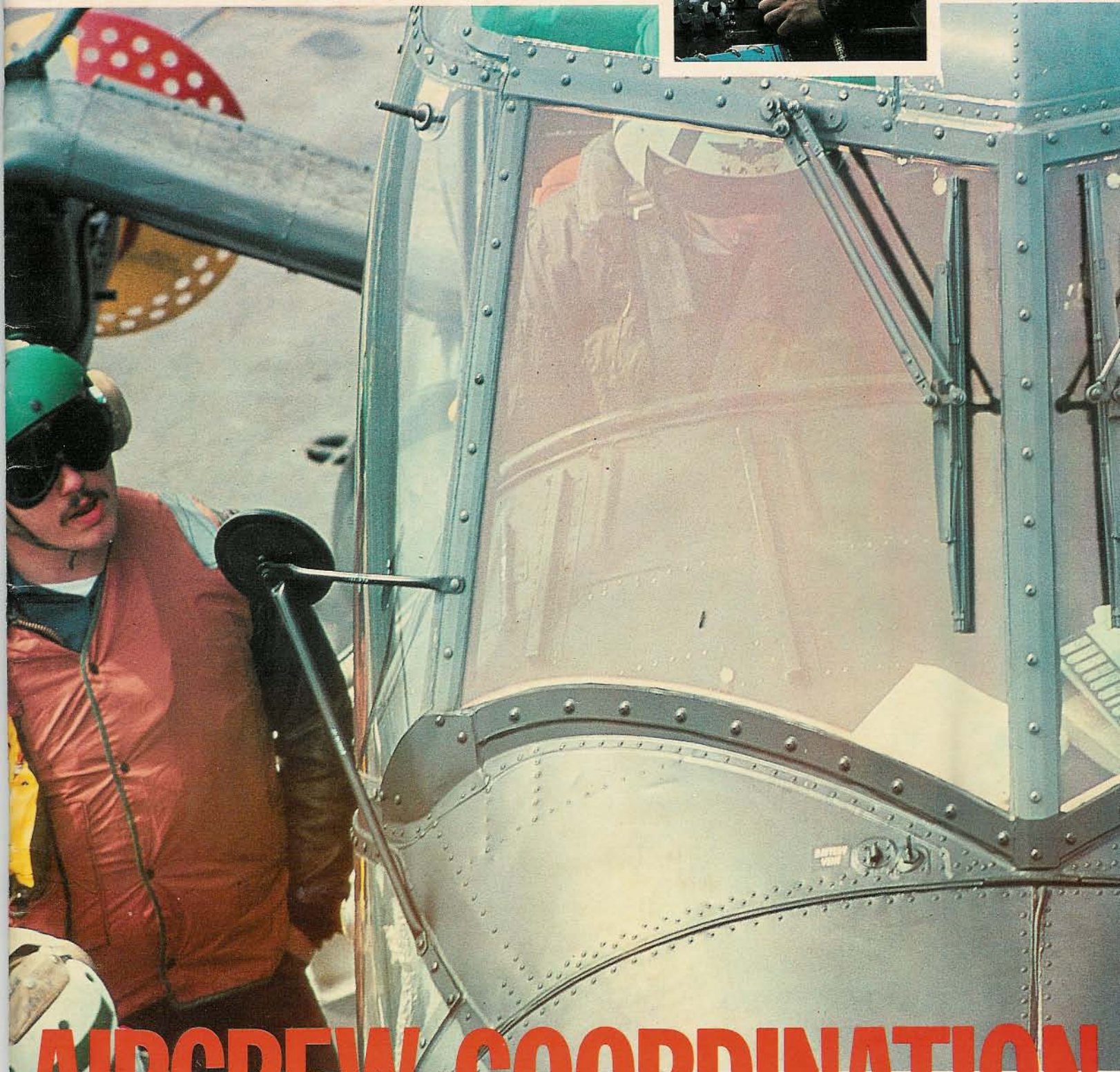


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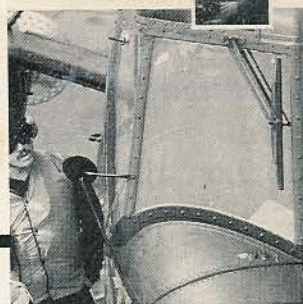


AIRCREW COORDINATION

inside approach

Vol. 34 No. 6

approach



Front and back covers:
Communicating with
each other often is what
aircrew coordination is all
about.

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The Rescue of the *Bonefish*



ON April 24, 1988, USS *Bonefish* (SS-582) experienced a serious fire that began in high-voltage DC cable in a midship compartment. The fire rapidly spread upward, producing fumes and dense smoke. Many of the 92 crewmen aboard were affected and barely managed to escape to the stricken sub's deck and sail to await rescue by nearby ships and helicopters.

Three men died, but 89 survived, rescued by the combined efforts of helos and whaleboats. Five SH-3Hs from USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV-67) and one SH-60 Lamps MK III Seahawk from USS *Carr* (FFG-52) rescued 62 crewmen, shuttling them to the *Carr*. Some seriously injured crewmen were subsequently flown to *Kennedy*. Here are two accounts of the airborne portion of the rescue. The first is from the pilot in command of the first helicopter on the scene, and the second story is by one of his aircrewmembers.

An Easy Day

By Cdr. J.J. Waickwicz

27

"I need help! Get as many squadron aircraft out here ASAP! We've got a big problem!"

It was a warm sunny day off the coast of southern Florida. We were having a great Advanced Phase prior to an upcoming fall cruise and were only three days from a port visit to Ft. Lauderdale. My tour was coming to an end and so would my ulcers as the maintenance officer. I was scheduled to fly a leisurely afternoon PG/ASW mission with the prospective NATOPS officer. Today, I would sit back in the left seat, enjoy the weather and watch the sea creatures splash around the CV. With the CO already working with the exercise sub, I didn't think he'd ever come back in to allow us to go out for some sub time — an *easy* day.

As we droned around in Starboard D, we could hear the skipper talking to USS *Carr* (FFG-52) as they conducted coordinated attacks on USS *Bonefish* (SS-582). About an hour and one-half into the flight, we were salivating to get into the ASW picture, but, no way, the skipper was having too much fun.

At about the two-hour mark, the CO called to say he was inbound for a swap. He would take the PG so we could get some ASW time. With clearance from the tower, we proceeded outbound to exchange missions at the 15-mile point. Our gears immediately shifted as we started thinking about ASW



tactics, and re-briefed our plan of action. As I checked the fuel gauges, I noticed we had two hours to splash. No problem. One hour of good ASW and back in plenty of time to make our recovery.

With the swap report complete, we were streaking out to datum — 42 miles from mother. Still a fairly *easy* day.

At datum we found the *Carr* trailing the *Bonefish*, which

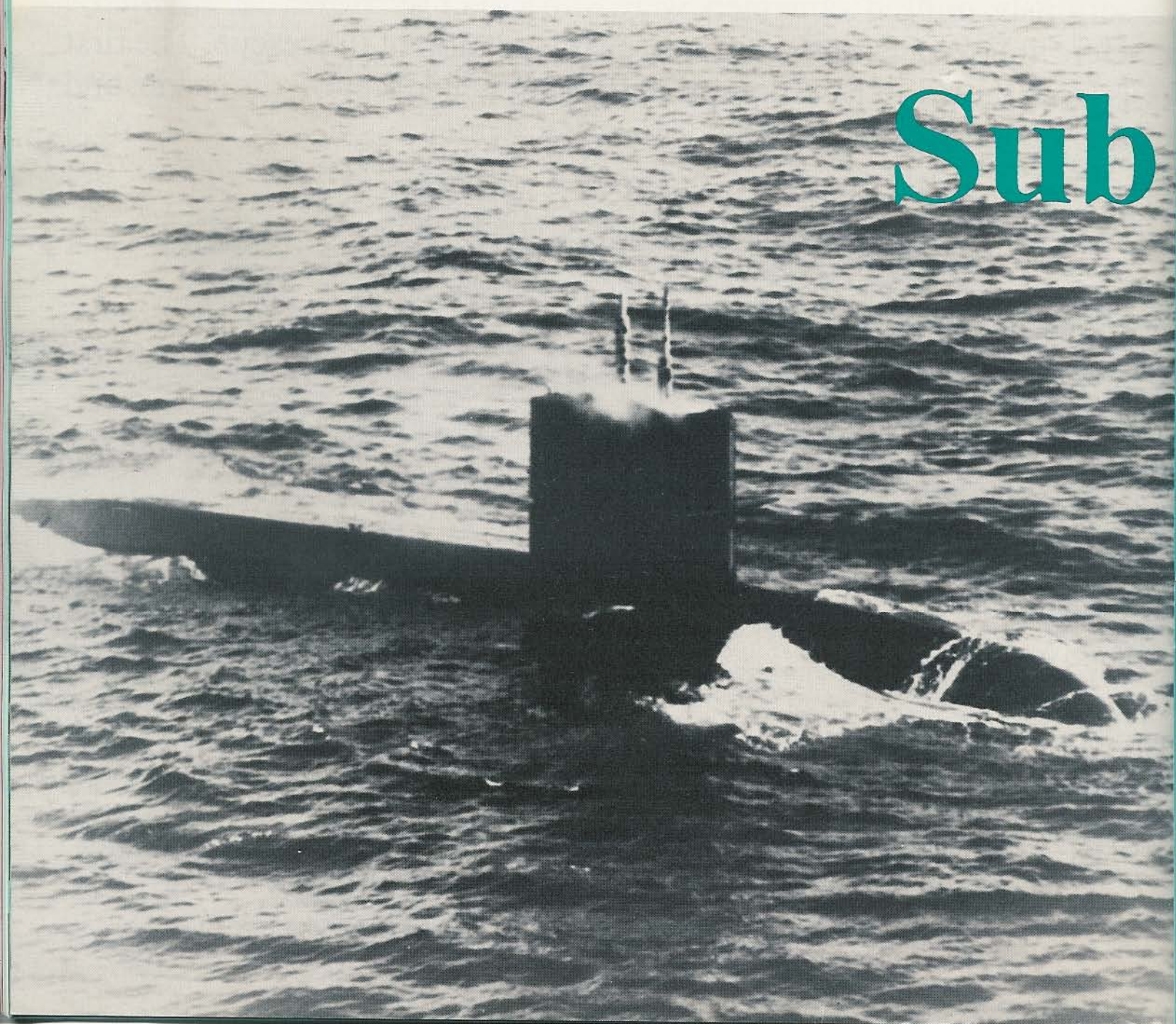
was at periscope depth. Upon arrival, we checked out our equipment and established comms with all units. At COMMEEX, the sub went sinker and the games began. We were 1v1 against the sub, and loving it. The crew was clicking and immediately gained attack criteria. After 30 minutes of great ASW, the *Carr* called that the sub was surfacing with a fire on board. Immediately, we retrieved the sonar dome and rigged for rescue. Maybe this wasn't going to be such an easy day.

Once on the surface, the sub's crew evacuated the hull bringing numerous injured personnel on deck. The *Carr* launched her LAMPS MK III helo, and we stood by while the situation was evaluated. The *Carr* called to begin hoisting the crew from the stricken sub. At first, the SH-60 was going to start the hoisting. I overrode the call since we could take more

off. The MK III helo took station behind us as a backstop in case a crewman fell off the floundering sub. Hoisting began from the right seat as the sub's sail provided the only visual reference. After recovering eight personnel, we were waved over to a badly injured crewman on the diving plane. My copilot made a flawless, high, no-reference pick-up, guided calmly and expertly by the first crewman. With nine survivors aboard, we proceeded to the *Carr* while the SH-60 took our place over the sub. Our normal passenger load is three, but because we had a greatly reduced amount of fuel, and we were not going that far, and the circumstances required it, I decided to take the nine submariners aboard.

As we came around for our second session, we found the LAMPS helo had placed a crewman on board the sub to facilitate the crew getting into the horse collar. Again, we

Sub



hoisted nine people aboard and carried them to the *Carr*.

One of the sub's crewmen was in the water, untethered, and the SH-60 went into action. The MK III was immediately over him and quickly got him aboard. Eventually, we would find out that playing backstop had prevented anyone from being washed overboard and lost.

On our third hover over the sub, the wind had twisted the sub around, and the copilot could only see the stern, so I had to fly from the left seat to maintain a visual reference to the sail. By this time, the hoisting had become almost routine. Our crewmen were timing the hoists, which, from aircraft to deck, and back to the aircraft with a survivor, was 60 seconds. As we picked up the sixth crewman, the cavalry came flying over the horizon. Four of our squadronmates arrived on scene to provide us and the SH-60 some relief.

We had 15 minutes of fuel left, about 400 pounds, so we refueled on the frigate, as well as getting some liquid replenishment for ourselves — we were dehydrated. While we refueled, five medevacs were readied for us to carry back to mom. Once back aboard the CV, we were hot-seated, ending our "easy" flight.

As we sank into the ready room chairs, completely exhausted, we reflected on our day. Plane guard, ASW with numerous attacks, SAR with 24 rescues from a sub, medevac of five personnel, DLQ requal, and — for me as MO — having all six aircraft airborne.

The bottom line is that there is no *easy* day in naval aviation. The routine can turn into the most challenging and demanding flying in a heartbeat. Strong training and crew coordination allowed us to complete all the missions.

Cdr. Waickwicz was the maintenance officer for HS-7 at the time of this incident. He is currently the chief of staff for HSWING One, and P-XO of HS-15.

in Trouble!

By AW1 James E. Chapman

MY squadron is in the business of sinking submarines and saving lives. A flight crew will rarely find themselves performing both missions during one sortie. However, on April 24, 1988, the men of HS-7 and the crew of USS *Carr* (FFG-52) found themselves involved in both. We were working with the *Carr* on an ASW exercise. Our target was USS *Bonefish* (SS-582).

"Sonar contact bearing two five seven, range 920."

"Roger sonar, bearing clear, classify." My pilot and copilot kept our SH-3H in a perfect coupled hover while my second crewman and I tracked the *Bonefish* in preparation for a simulated MK 46 torpedo attack. We were in our element; it was ASW at its simulated best. But, suddenly, something went wrong.

The *Bonefish* keyed an emergency distress signal via its underwater communications net. As she surfaced, smoke billowed from her sail area. Two men,

blackened by smoke, waved their arms vigorously in an emergency distress signal.

As the *Bonefish* lay dead in the water, her crew began to clamber haphazardly out of open hatches on the sail and after deck. Smoke poured from both hatches as if it were coming from an industrial smoke stack. Some men were visibly more affected by fumes than others. One man, overcome by fumes, fell from the conning tower onto the port diving planes, and lay there, unconscious, in a precarious condition.

Carr closed rapidly to assist, and we proceeded to a hover 50 yards astern of our troubled playmate. At this point, the weary submarine crew began jettisoning shoes and expended firefighting equipment in preparation to abandoning ship. Our ASW partner was fighting for her life.

We immediately took control of the situation and began rescue procedures.

We moved in over the smoking submarine and hoisted eight dazed submariners off the after deck. Then, we maneuvered to the port diving plane to try to rescue the unconscious crewman. Holding high to avoid the periscope and antenna mast, my copilot hovered to allow the unconscious crewman's buddies to place him in the horse collar.

We then took the nine crewmen to the *Carr* for medical treatment. We quickly returned to rescue 15 more, in two trips.

By then, four more HS-7 helos from *Kennedy*, and an SH-60 from *Carr*, had arrived. As I watched, a skyful of helicopters plucked man after man from the water and sub with precise coordination. I realized this evolution was the culmination of years of preparation, training and, most of all, courage. Without the efforts of our aircrews and squadron personnel, more lives would have been lost.

AW1 Chapman is an ASW first crewman with HS-7.