

Date of incident:

16 December 1972

Crash related deaths:

LCDR Paul R. Lewis (CG Aviator #955)

MAJ Marvin A. Cleveland, USAF Exchange pilot

AD1 Edward J. Nemetz

AT3 Clinton A. Edwards

Plus four crewmen from the Wanda Dene

William Peek, George Dayhoss, Herbert Hardy & Paul Manley

Air Station the aircraft and/or crew were assigned to:

Air Station St. Petersburg

Aircraft type and Coast Guard tail number:

Sikorsky HH-3F Pelican, 1474

Location of the incident:

Gulf of Mexico west of Sarasota, Florida

Description of the incident:

It was late on Saturday when the fishing vessel Wanda Dene, sent out a distress call. It was 35 miles southwest of Key West, taking on water and sinking in rough seas and needed assistance. Helicopter 1474 was launched with its crew of four for a long range rescue.

The helicopter arrived overhead the Wanda Dene several hours later and successfully hoisted the four crewmen from the sinking vessel in rough seas. The 1474 then flew to the Naval Air Station, Key West, FL to refuel. From there 1474, now with eight people aboard, departed for a return flight to St. Pete at about 7 p.m. Normal flight operations were reported with regular radio position reports until about 8:30 p.m. Two days later a small portion of the helicopter was found in the Gulf of Mexico south

of Fort Myers. Despite a massive search very little of the aircraft was ever found and only one body, that of one of the fisherman, was ever found. Cause of the crash was never determined.