

“What about the others?”

“They need to be destroyed.”

One of us said, and to this day I don't remember who, “Let's get an air strike in on them.” Jim got General Vaught on the radio and recommended he be given authority to bring in the air strike.

There was a lot of movement on the ground. I wanted everyone out of the desert as soon as possible.

I walked back to the last 130 in line. Buckshot had just jumped off and was going down to help get the Road Watch Team back.

Some of the planes had begun to taxi to their takeoff positions.

Off to the side I watched the Marine pilots running as hard as they could for our aircraft. Once on board, the ramp was drawn up and slammed closed.

I climbed up into the cockpit and our aircraft began to move. It taxied in a half circle. We were then third in line to take off. The two in front lifted off.

The fuel truck had nearly burned itself out, but the chopper and 130 were still burning violently.

It was almost 3:00 A.M.

After being on the ground for four hours and fifty-six minutes, Delta was leaving Desert One.

Down the unimproved road we rolled. The big 130 began to pick up speed. Suddenly, we hit an embankment. I remember having seen it on the ground; it must have been three feet high. We were moving fast by then and the nose of that C-130 jerked almost straight up. Then it dropped hard. “We've just bought the farm!” If there's such a thing as luck... The plane bounced on the ground. The pilot gave it more power and somehow managed to get it back into the air. Next thing I knew, we were gaining altitude.

Had we been able to keep to the plan at Desert One, the six fully loaded helicopters would now be nearing the hide-site.

As it was, we hit the Gulf of Oman sometime after first light. I looked down and saw a small dhow sailing on the slate-blue sea.