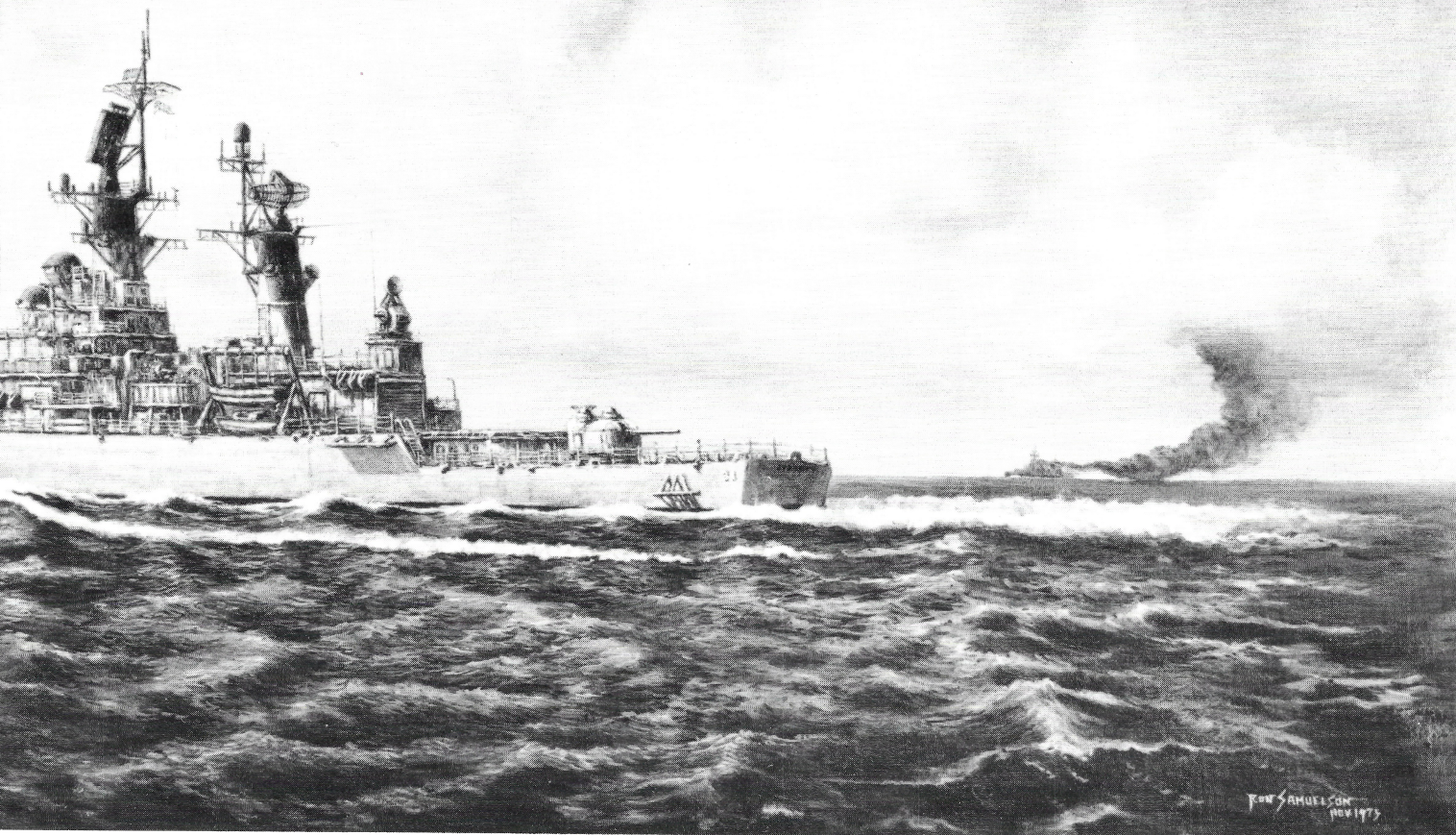


# Dong Hoi



▲ A dramatic moment in the battle off Dong Hoi as depicted in a painting by CDR Ronald A. Samuelson USNR. The scene shows USS *Sterett*, the destruction of the first MiG and the damaged *Higbee* in the background. Painting courtesy of Navy Combat Art Gallery.

handling room, and then the ammunition stored there exploded, completely destroyed the mount, handling room, magazine sprinkling systems and fire main in the aft section of the ship.

"The explosion also ruptured the aft fuel tanks, spewing over 90,000 gallons of highly flammable liquid throughout the aft portion of the ship. Flames quickly engulfed the entire aft portion of the ship, which contained 600 rounds of ammunition. As secondary explosions rocked the ship, coastal shore batteries continued their counter battery fire."

But luck was with the *Higbee*. Previously, when shelling the enemy shore she had experienced a hang-fire in the after mount and that station had been evacuated by the time of the MiG attack. As a result, the bomb killed no one and only four crewmembers were injured.

*Sterett*, in the meantime, had zeroed in on the MiG as it was pulling up from its bombing run and starting to turn for another pass. Range was 9,500 yards and elevation low (300 feet). CAPT Reichert gave the command

"Missiles Free," the missile fired and again the fire control officer raced to the bridge to visually observe the results. Moments later he returned; "Direct hit!" he roared and then, LCDR Cornforth said, "There was this tremendous cheer in CIC." The Terrier had struck the MiG where the wings join the fuselage. "Instant death," said LCDR Cornforth.

Excitement in CIC was brought under control and LCDR Abrams reminded them, "There are still more MiGs flying out there, and enemy surface craft."

"In fact," said LCDR Cornforth, "we saw lots of surface activity out there. I can't recall how many separate blips were on the radar, but there were quite a few."

"We shot again at a MiG that started out over the water, a two-missile salvo. There was no way for us to directly assess it, but at the time of the intercept we saw the missile go through the gate and the target disappear. Later confirmation proved that, in fact, that MiG was flight terminated."

During that same period, more than seventeen uniden-