

UNCLASSIFIED

5 September 1967

STATEMENT OF LCDR ROBERT S. OWEN, USN, 622359/1310

On 19 May 1967 I flew as number four pilot in a six-plane element of A-6A aircraft participating in a visual strike against the Van Dien Vehicle Depot Complex south of Hanoi. LCDR MCDANIEL and LT PATTERSON flew the number three A-6A. As we approached the Bien Hoa (Banana) Valley, we received warning of a missile launch, and LTJG SLAATED called sighting the missile at one o'clock. At the time the flight was conducting level turns at 15,000 feet. After the missile was sighted, LCDR MCDANIEL turned right (away from the flight leader), then began to turn back to the left to rejoin. He was considerably stepped down on the leader and in trying to keep both him and the leader in sight, I was unable to spend much time looking for the missile. As we rejoined the leader, LCDR MCDANIEL began a slow right roll to match the leader's wings, then suddenly jettisoned his bombs and started a very rapid right roll. Just then the missile detonated between him and me. I felt the shock, then heard the rattle of small particles striking my aircraft. LCDR MCDANIEL continued his right turn for about 20°, then rolled wings level and commenced a shallow glide. I called, "This is RAYGUN FOUR, I'm hit." About five seconds later, LCDR MCDANIEL's aircraft began trailing grey smoke from the right shoulder area, and with power at idle I still couldn't stay behind him without climbing. I called, "This is RAYGUN FOUR, I'm hit but flying OK, RAYGUN THREE is hit and burning. RAYGUN THREE, do you read?" I received no response from either LCDR MCDANIEL or LT PATTERSON. They continued their straight glide to about 5,000 feet, then ejected. I was to the left and about 1,000 feet above them when they ejected. I reported two good chutes, and my bombardier/navigator, LTJG BORCHERS recorded their position. One of the F4B pilots reported that he was assuming a RESCAP position over the downed airmen, and since I did not know the extent of damage to my own aircraft, I returned to base.

ROBERT S. OWEN

GROUP-4
Downgraded at 3-year intervals;
Declassified after 12 years.

Enclosure (1) to CO, VA-35
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