

Origins of Pararescue

February 5, 1947:

Headquarters Air Rescue Service (MATS) submits letter requesting authorization to establish Parachute Rescue Teams. A few weeks later verbal authority approval was given by Headquarters Army Air Forces.

August 1, 1947:

An ARS parachute rescue team accomplished a capabilities demonstration at Bolling Field Washington DC.

September 1947:

ARS parachute rescue teams are dispatched on 30-day TDY basis to Great Falls Montana to provide rescue coverage for the ALCAN project that would begin on the 1 October.

Circa September 1947: Headquarters Air Rescue Services requests a new Rescue Survival Serial Specification Number (SSN) be established for enlisted personnel assigned to its land rescue, parachute rescue, and its advanced Rescue and Survival schools. This SSN request was approved NLT 23 June 1948. See attached news article which discusses the Alaska Air Command using this SSN for enlisted assigned to its Arctic Indoctrination (survival) school and its 10th Air Rescue Squadron Land Search Branch. It should be noted ARS trained parachute rescue teams were concurrently being assigned to the 10th Air Rescue Squadron.

December 27, 1947:

Three service members who volunteered to parachute to the location of a crashed B-29 (Clobbered Turkey) about 50 miles northeast of the vicinity of Nome Alaska tragically died in the attempt. It was determined these three parachutists lacked the experience and the equipment necessary to jump in such harsh weather conditions (a few hours after sunset, 50 mph winds, sb zero temperature of minus 30 to minus 40 degrees.

The historical origins of the career 3383P SSN is somewhat complicated and not well documented. However, there were many high-ranking flag officers involved who had firsthand knowledge of parachute rescue team operation conducted during the Second World War and the following years.

For example General Frank Everest who commanded the Yukon Sector, Alaskan Air Command, with Headquarters at Ladd Field, Alaska during the period January 1947 to June 1948 who was

closely involved in the Clobbered Turkey rescue efforts subsequently assumed duties deputy chief of staff for operations at Air Force Headquarters in Washington DC.

Another example is Flight Surgeon Lt. Colonel Donald Flickinger who developed and implemented the first formal survival instructor oriented training program at the School of Applied Tactics-Aeromedical Training Branch, Orlando FL during 1944. This training was provided to Personal Equipment Officers (SSN1042) which was discontinued by 1947. Further SSN 1042 performing survival instructor duties didn't survive the conversion implemented in 1952 to the Air Operation Officer AFSC.

Circa 1951, SSN 3883P was converted to Resue Survival Specialist AFSC 921X1. This was deleted (Air Rescue Service was the only user of the AFSC) and revised when the enlisted Aircrew Protection Career Field was established in 1952. The aircrew protection career field sort of retained the Rescue and Survival specialty, and certainly retained the Survival Training, and Personal Equipment (subsequently Life Support) specialties. It's not until the 1967 revision of the Aircrew Protection Career Field that a distinctive separate AFSC reappears for pararescue.