

Rescue Group Achieves Base Unit Standing

Saving of Downed Airmen Gets Shot in Arm in New Setup

Bringing out downed airmen from the almost inaccessible Himalaya mountain region has become such a prominent part of ICD's operations that the Search and Rescue squadron has been activated to full base unit status.

The new organization is known as the 1352nd and will be located at the 1332nd Base Unit. It is commanded by Maj. Donald C. Pricer. Assigned in India for almost two years, he has been a pilot, operations officer and an executive. Maj. Roland L. Hedrick will continue with the new unit as intelligence officer.

Safety Factor

The unit will share part of the facilities of the 1332nd but will be complete within itself. Its assigned aircraft will include armed B-25s, C-47s for cargo dropping, and L-5s for evacuation and rescue from tiny airstrips in jungles and mountains.

Two main reasons are given for the formal activation of the 1352nd. First, increasing Hump traffic has necessitated greater facilities for rescue work. Second, past developments have proved that organized effort to bring back downed airmen is effective and necessary.

Records show that those who bail out over the Hump or in the trackless Assam jungles now have a better than three-to-one chance of returning safely. But it wasn't always thus.

Like Country Store

Previous to October, 1943, rescue activities were sporadic and unorganized. Each station hunted for its own planes and pilots. Jungle tribes were unknown and believed to be headhunters, fiercely quarrelsome and war-like. Experience has proved this untrue.

The search and rescue group soon established liaison with British Territorial officials and American missionaries who knew the jungle and mountain people.

By trial and error the organization grew until it had its own warehouses, aircraft and intelligence unit - everything needed to permit maximum aid to luckless airmen who hit the silk. Today, the 1352nd's warehouses look like a country store. Blankets, clothing, Bibles, and trinkets for barter line the shelves.

When an aircraft from any command reports trouble the unit springs into action. Once a fix is obtained on the probable position of the distressed ship, search planes take off. When the crashed craft is spotted and if survivors appear to be on the scene, panels for communication are dropped. Physical condition of crew members is checked by the panel method, and if necessary a volunteer flight surgeon parachutes with medicine. Supplies and maps are dropped, directing the party out by easy stages, with instructions as to previously spotted food caches.

Some airmen are brought by L-5s, from tiny strips hacked from the jungle or perched on a mountainside, but most walk out - some taking as long as three months. Still others have shot the rapids in native rafts and canoes, to return to their station and again take on the job of flying the Hump.

*Yes or No? Take
Your Choice! It
Beats Everybody*

Is there a mountain peak somewhere in remote Tibet that towers to a height greater than that of Mount Everest?

The rumor keeps cropping up, and the answer is maybe. First inkling appeared in print as a result of a gag between two operations officers at a China ICD base. In front of the correspondent of a leading newsmagazine, they batted the rumor back and forth. He, smart fellow, wrote it as a rumor piece. Frankly, the two pilots who started the gag did not believe it themselves.

Then along came a major, in charge of a photo-mapping unit, who swore by all that's holy that he'd flown close to a peak that towered above him, while he was at 30,000 feet, according to his calculations.

If any pilot in the India-Burma or China theaters can positively say "yes" or "no," the HUMP EXPRESS will buy him a pair of north China de luxe fur-lined earmuffs - or even a short beer!