

23Dec47

Fairbanks, Alaska. A B-29 rams into a snow covered mountain. The "Clobbered Turkey" is spotted 27 December by a search aircraft. It appears that some of the crew are still alive but injured and will soon freeze to death unless help arrives soon. At this time there are no trained Pararescue teams in Northern Alaska. A request is made for volunteers to parachute to the wreckage with the hope of saving the survivors. An Army doctor, Lieutenant Albert C. Kinney (MC), and two Army medical corpsmen, Sergeant Santhal O. London, a veteran of seventy jumps who had flown with Admiral Byrd, and T/5 Leon J. Casey, volunteer for the dangerous mission. Equipped only with their medical kits and heavy clothing, the trio parachute into darkness onto the frigid Alaskan mountain slope. The deep snow, high winds, and lack of adequate training soon claims the lives of the three volunteers. Although six crewmembers are later recovered, this sad mishap again indicates the urgent need for the establishment of a professional well-trained Pararescue capability.

23 December 1947 Clobbered Turkey SAR

Scanned file of copy old newspapers results in a large 4MB file and some hard to read type. This mission is significant in that it differs from the successful missions emphasized as being instrumental in the establishment of the first USAF Para-rescue teams. Although Col Knight gave verbal approval to initiate preparations for Para-rescue teams in a January 13, 1947 staff meeting and sent a letter seeking such approval to the Commanding General, Air Transport dated February 5, 1947. Air Force approval to actually establish and organize such teams didn't happen until July 1947. (Note AF didn't separate from the Army until September 1947).

The two successful missions often cited is the 2 August 1943 jump done by Flickinger, Passey, and MacKenzie in the China Burma India (CBI) combat operations area (all three jumping without orders or official permission to attempt a jump) the second is the Nicaraguan jump mission done by para-doc Holliday on 27 May 1947. However, the earliest military para doctors and rescue jumpers were being trained in 1940, records infer several other jumps were made but fails to give specifics. Regardless, it wasn't until ARS establishing its para rescue teams that standardized techniques, procedures, qualifications, and equipment began to be developed implemented that consistently more often resulted in success.

The Clobbered Turkey is the best example of failure resulting from the belief all is needed is a qualified parachutist to do a para-rescue.

23 December 1947: Air Force B-29 "Clobbered Turkey" with crew of eight failed to return from a routine long range navigation flight. Search started. Bad weather and short hours of day light hamper search and rescue.

Winds ranging from 26 to 40 MPH, temp -40 degree F.

27 December 1947: senior officer directs flight surgeon and two enlisted jumpers to jump.

29 December 1947 no word from rescue jumpers, but four survivors sighted by wreckage. Paper reports pilot of Clobbered Turkey was at the controls of B-28 "Ken Bird" which was forced down in Northern Greenland in February 21, 1947, and another B-29 he was piloting crashed and burned at Ladd Field two month before that on December 12, 1946. Paper also reports crash landing of C-47 tow plane and glider involved in rescue attempt. None of 7 in C-47 and 5 rescuers in glider were injured. Private Bush Pilots now attempting to land at crash site.

30 December 1947--6 of 8 crewmembers through heroism of bush pilots 2-crew and 3-rescue jumpers missing. 2 bodies sighted less than 500 yards of the crash site. A driver and dog team will attempt to locate today.

31 Dec 1947--Co-pilot said plane was in the weather flying in white out with Altimeter showing 1,500 feet, crew thought they were still over the sea ice. Plane burned and took emergency equipment with it. Cold weather clothing worn by crew not adequate for the cold and wind chill encountered after the crash. Pilot and Navigator decided to walk two days after crash to an Eskimo Village they thought was only 50 miles away.

3 January 1948, wreckage of B-29 that exploded in air three days earlier spotted on beach in Knick area.

6 January 1948 Body of one rescue jumper, 1st Sgt Santhell London found 500 yards from Clobbered Turkey and recovered. Note he was considered an arctic survival expert and had been with Admiral Bryd's 1946 Antarctic expedition. Had 70 jumps

10 January 1948 a deep furrow in the snow, running for two miles may point to spot one of the rescue jumpers was dragged to. Reported started 150 feet south of where 1st Sgt London's body was found. 1st Sgt London's body was found 500 feet from the Clobbered Turkey.

10 January--Squadron sends \$1,000 to London's widow. Couple had been married less than two months.

12 January 1948 Body of second rescue jumper, T/5 Leon Casey found 7-miles from Clobbered Turkey Crash site.

13 January 1948, Bodies of Pilot and Navigator, no details of location found published. However old time PJs that included dog sled driver involved stated they did not crash where they thought they were and were heading further away from any known village.

30 January 1948 further search for flight surgeon abandoned

27 March 1948, Posthumous DFCs awarded to the three rescue jumpers.

23 June 1948--air command calls for arctic vets for new specialty called "Arctic Survival Expert" for instruction purposes and to be part of a land search team.

3 July 1948, Bush pilot locates body of flight surgeon.

31 August 1948 Para-doctor Lt Robert Weise and rescue jumpers Cpl Harold D Marden, SSgt Keith Clemmons and PFC William Anderson make training jump, article states "Ironically enough the Alaska woodsmen are trained in Tampa Florida.

14th jump for Clemmons, 19th Jump for Wiese, Marden has 30 jumps, Anderson has 40 jumps. Both Anderson and Marden did combat jump at Corregidor when MacArthur returned.

Also states "Formerly the men were taught to land with legs apart and then tumble-Now we hit with knees together and slightly bent and then just fall over."

Lots of lessons learned on this. Rescue operations were controlled by SAC as ARS was not yet present in Alaska.