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PROBLEM

1. To provide a means of emergency air evacuation of critically wounded Ground Force Personnel from forward areas of combat, where airfields or landing strips are non-existent, to an area or location where adequate medical facilities are available.

FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

2. During present operations in Korea, many lives have been and are being lost due to delay in evacuating the critically wounded by vehicle to rear areas where adequate medical facilities are available.

3. Evacuation of wounded from battle areas is presently charged to the Army Ground Forces.

4. CG, FFAF, is utilizing all Air Rescue Service helicopters assigned to search and rescue in Japan to perform evacuation of the critically wounded.

5. The Air Rescue Service cannot continue to fulfill this evacuation requirement without jeopardizing the primary mission of search and rescue insofar as helicopter operation is concerned.

6. ARS is not charged with this mission of air evacuation under present USAF directives and is not organized, equipped, manned or trained to perform this evacuation on the scale proven necessary during current operations in Korea.

7. MATS has organized, trained, and equipped units in being designed to perform the Air Evacuation mission between established airfields or airstrips.

8. The air evacuation mission and the Air Rescue Mission are dissimilar to the point of not being able to be performed adequately by the same organization without both missions being hampered.

DISCUSSION

9. Shortly after the outbreak of the Korean war the CG, 5th AF, directed the 3rd Air Rescue Squadron in Japan to deploy all helicopters in their possession to the Korean Front. These helicopters are transporting critically wounded ground forces personnel from front line combat areas to field hospitals for urgently required medical treatment and/or airfields for further evacuation to a general hospital. Helicopter evacuation is restricted to critically wounded personnel who would not survive unless immediate and rapid evacuation facilities are utilized.

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10. In the Korean war many lives have been lost and are still being lost due to the delay in evacuating critically wounded personnel from front line combat areas to hospitals. Rough terrain, lack of roads, and adverse weather conditions preclude the utilization of vehicles to perform this important mission due to the critical time element involved. Helicopters assigned to the Air Rescue Service in the Far East are presently being utilized with a high degree of success in performing emergency evacuation of critically wounded personnel. However, the Air Rescue Service mission of search and rescue of air crews requires utilization of all available rescue personnel and equipment 100% of the time and Air Rescue Service cannot continue to fulfill this evacuation requirement without jeopardizing the primary mission of search and rescue insofar as helicopter operations are concerned.

11. The mission of the Air Rescue Service does not include the evacuation of ground force casualties from the front line combat areas, therefore, this organization is not manned or equipped to perform this mission and in addition provide adequate search and rescue coverage for personnel involved in aircraft incidents. In view of the action taken by Hq, 5th Air Force, explained in paragraph 9, above, this headquarters has taken action to transfer two (2) additional helicopters and crews from the ZI to the 3rd Air Rescue Squadron to provide helicopter rescue coverage in Japan. However, this action is considered most undesirable because of the critical shortage of helicopters within the Air Rescue Service, and is a temporary measure designed to meet this immediate need.

12. Inasmuch as the Korean conflict has generated an urgent requirement for helicopter evacuation of battle casualties from front line combat areas and there is no organization in being responsible for performing this mission, it is felt that a helicopter squadron should be organized, manned, trained and equipped to perform this specific mission. The organization of such a unit would provide for adequate emergency air evacuation from front line combat areas and enable this organization to utilize all assigned personnel and equipment in the performance of the primary mission assigned to the Air Rescue Service.

13. At the present time it is the responsibility of MATS and/or troop carrier squadrons to provide air evacuation facilities for military patients between general hospitals and station hospitals in the ZI and overseas. These organizations are trained and equipped to perform evacuation of military patients between established air bases. However, there is no air organization in being that is equipped for and charged with the responsibility of providing air evacuation of military patients from Front Line Battalion First Aid Stations to field or station hospitals.

14. Air evacuation of casualties from the Battalion First Aid Station cannot be accomplished by conventional type aircraft due to the lack of air strips or suitable landing sites in the vicinity of the first aid stations. The organization of a helicopter equipped unit is required.

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evacuating battle casualties to the nearest landing strip whether it be twenty (20) or one hundred (100) miles away, would provide the missing link which is so desperately required to furnish a complete evacuation facility by air from the front lines to a general hospital in a non-combat area. These helicopters could be utilized to transport special priority personnel and equipment to the front lines on the return flight. In addition, these aircraft could be utilized as artillery spotters, for liaison purposes, reconnaissance, and general emergency utility purposes.

CONCLUSIONS

15. Evacuation by vehicle of critically wounded military personnel from front line first aid stations to field hospitals is unsatisfactory and in many cases results in death of the casualty due to the time element involved.

16. Utilization of Air Rescue Service helicopters to perform urgently needed evacuation of critically wounded personnel has proven very satisfactory and has been instrumental in the saving of many lives on the Korean front.

17. A requirement exists for a helicopter facility, trained and equipped, capable of evacuating critically wounded personnel from inaccessible front line combat areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. That USAF organize and equip special helicopter utility squadrons to fulfill front line evacuation requirements of the military ground forces, and that these units be made a permanent part of the USAF structure. Such squadrons would be capable of performing all evacuation missions and in addition could be utilized to provide utility transportation of special personnel and priority cargo and equipment to strategic points along the front.

19. That action recommended in paragraph 18 above be taken as soon as possible so that Rescue personnel and equipment presently being utilized for evacuation in Korea can be released to perform the primary mission of search and rescue as outlined in AFR 20-54.

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