

Thirteen Eglin Airmen Featured In James Bond's New Movie Entitled 'Thunderball'

Thirteen airmen assigned to the 48th Air Recovery Squadron have turned para-actors and now claim the legendary serial numbers "007."

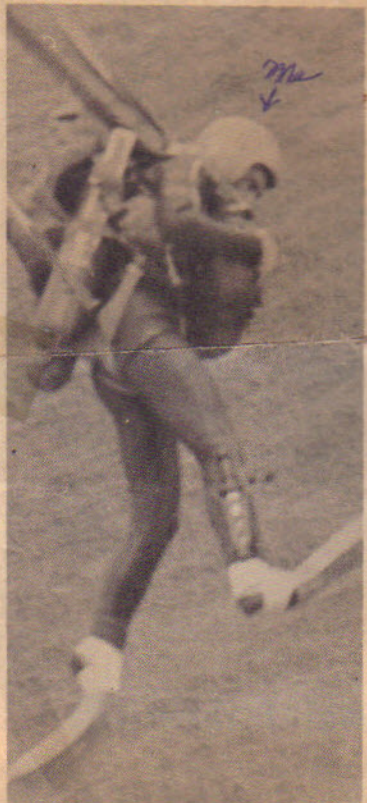
No they haven't turned secret agents ala' James Bond but they have played a small part in the soon to be released movie "Thunderball," the latest United Artists Production of Ian Fleming's novels.

The airman, all highly skilled paratroopers, assisted in a sky-diving scene filmed in Miami Beach, Fla., last week.

"We jumped out of an HC-97 in Biscayne Bay at an altitude of 1500 ft. said TSgt Lewis Roberts. "We played the good guys and were helping James Bond destroy the villains who were about to blow up the East Coast."

Others who played movie star for the two day shooting were Sgts. Harry Cohen, Kerry Kelly, William Kelsey, William McDougl, and Loch Williamson. The airmen were Dennis Kraft, Roy Schrezer, Nick Randell, Andrae Raymond, Gorden Thaver, Herb Rommish, and Randy Pickelsimer.

So the life of "007" continues. And as for 13 para-rescuemen at Eglin, James Bond means more than just a fictional character out of the talented mind of the late Ian Fleming.



EDITORIALS

Welcome to Eglin, Agent 007

Even a villain with a one-track mind, like the gold-obsessed Auric Goldfinger, couldn't help but notice that this month is the 50th anniversary of the James Bond movies. The first, "Dr. No," opened in Britain in October 1962, and today the film series is being celebrated with books, DVDs, magazine articles and a special display at the Crestview Public Library.

Easier to overlook is the footnote that Eglin Air Force Base holds in the history of Agent 007.

Eglin's brief role was in 1965's "Thunderball," the fourth Bond film. At the movie's climax, armed U.S. troops parachute into the ocean to battle speargun-toting terrorists who are transporting a nuclear bomb underwater. The bad guys plan to detonate the bomb near Miami.

Among the parachutists were 13 Eglin airmen. According to an article this newspaper published July 21, 1965, the airmen, "all skilled paratroopers, assisted in a skydiving scene filmed in Miami Beach" the week before.

"We jumped ... at an altitude of 1,500 feet," Tech. Sgt. Lewis Roberts recalled. "We played the good guys and were helping James Bond destroy the villains."

In 2005, a contributor to **ScubaBoard.com** added some details.

"I knew some of the pararescuemen who made the parachute jumps for the movie," he wrote. "They were not paid, and the jump was actually written off as a USAF parascuba training jump. It was out of an HC-97 aircraft, which was notorious for being difficult to jump from. ... It was not a precision jump. ... The jump was a mass exit, and they must have spread jumpers over about a quarter-mile of ocean (that's being kind). But it made for a good movie effect."

It also made for a movie smash. For a few years, "Thunderball" was among the top 10 box-office moneymakers of all time.

The entire Bond franchise, in fact, has been fabulously successful, which is why it has kept charging along as the various actors who've played 007 — Sean Connery, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan — have retired from the role or been replaced.

The current Bond is a chap named Daniel Craig. Perhaps someday Eglin airmen will help him, too, save the world.