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PACIFIC AIR FORCES NEWS SERVICE

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CLARK UNIT IN RESCUE

PHILIPPINES--Inter-service cooperation paid dividends in human life recently in the rescue of four survivors from two B-52 aircraft that crashed approximately 300 miles northwest of Clark Air Base while en route to a mission in Southeast Asia.

Early on the morning of June 18 a call was received from one of the KC-135 tankers participating in the mission, stating that two aircraft had gone down.

At 6 a.m., an HU-16 Albatross amphibian of the 31st Air Rescue Service Squadron based at Clark, was on its way to the crash scene. The crew aboard the aircraft was Capt. Anthony Muehling, pilot; 1st Lt. David Hines, copilot; 1st Lt. James Slocombe, navigator; SSgt. Charles Fakkema, flight mechanic and SSgt. Bobby Tyndall, radio operator.

Also on board were two pararescuemen, TSgt. William Vargas and ALC LANE Colin Laine.

Arriving at the scene the HU-16 landed on the water amid four to six feet waves. Two KC-135s remained in the area, and helped direct the HU-16 to the life rafts.

During the rescue operations, the HU-16 damaged a propeller and was unable to takeoff to return to Clark. The survivors were transferred to a passing Norwegian freighter, "The Argo." The two pararescuemen joined the four survivors to continue medical assistance and the remainder of the HU-16 crew remained with the aircraft to await the arrival of the U.S.

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Navy ship, "Point Defiance," which was on its way to the scene.

The Navy ship reached the scene at 5 p.m. and the Air Force Rescue crew boarded and immediately started preparing for towing operations for the crippled HU-16.

Due to the heavy seas the aircraft was swamped and sank. The "Point Defiance" took the crew to Cubi Point Naval Station where they boarded a USAF C-47 to return to Clark.

At approximately 7 a.m. the following morning, the call went out for volunteer "scanners" to fly aboard aircraft joining the search for more survivors.

The call turned up 300 personnel from the 405th Combat Support Group, 5th Epidemiological Flight and the 1st Mobile Communications Group.

Lt. Col. Karol F. Rybos, 31st Air Rescue Service Squadron commander stated, "I'm sorry that I could not use all of the volunteers, but I really appreciate their showing up at 3 a.m. for the briefing."

By 8 a.m. the first aircraft was on its way to the accident scene.

Aircraft used in the search came from as far away as Guam and Hawaii. Clark's Base Flight and the tactical rotational squadrons from Langley AFB, Va., and Stewart AFB, Tenn., added more aircraft to the search.

Pilots of the 8th and 13th B-57 Bombardment Squadrons at Clark; Navy aircraft from Subic Bay and Sangley Point; Navy ships, the "Point Defiance" and the "USS Grapple" and the Coast Guard cutter "Kukui" joined the mission which was finally called off at 8:55 p.m. June 19. (PACAF NS)

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