

3rd Group Honored

10 MAR 67

President Salutes Rescue Men

WASHINGTON — It was a balmy day for March and the sun shone through the windows of the White House.

President Lyndon B. Johnson looked at the sun and said something about it being a beautiful day in Washington but rescue pilots and crewmen in Vietnam often had to fly in weather that wasn't so beautiful.

Standing tall above the men in uniform, the president said: "The contributions of the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group to the struggle for freedom are already legendary". He said: "By their very existence, they have provided our downed fliers with the knowledge that they are not forgotten — that help is on the way". He said: "To a man bobbing in an empty sea or crawling through a dense jungle, that knowledge is a blessing without price".

597 Combat Saves

The 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, credited with 597 combat saves in Southeast Asia, that day received the Presidential Unit Citation and "the right to be honored among America's heroes".

Listening to the president were men such as Lt. Col. Baylor Haynes, who led the HH-3E Jolly Green Giants of Detachment 5 of the 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron; Capt. William E. Cowell, Capt. John Guilmartin, and Capt. James Butera, much-decorated HH-3E pilots; M/Sgt. Charles Walther, pararescueman with Detachment 6 of the 38th, and Airman/2C Malcolm Hasler, who flew more than 150 combat missions as a pararescueman with the HH-3Es of Detachment 5.

and presented to the Air Force for rescue work in Southeast Asia. The 38th Squadron, now part of the 3rd Group, received the citation last year.

This month's citation covers the period Aug. 1, 1965, to June 30, 1966. During that period, the group rescued 339 men, 304 from almost certain capture.

Rescues ranged from open-water pickups by amphibians in the Gulf of Tonkin, under fire from shore batteries, to rescues by helicopter deep in North Vietnam.

The 3rd Group served with distinction in World War II and in the Korean War, with 15 campaign streamers and six unit citations to its credit. Now based at Tan Son Nhut in Vietnam, the group flies HC-130H and HU-16 fixed-wing planes, and HH-3E, HH-43B, and HH-43F helicopters. There are three squad-

rons in the group: the 37th, 38th, and 39th.

Personnel from the group have received more than 1,800 individual awards. These have included: three Air Force Crosses, 64 Silver Stars, three awards of the Legion of Merit, 251 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 18 Airman's Medals, 24 Bronze Stars, 1,330 Air Medals, 25 Purple Hearts, and 117 Air Force Commendation Medals.

Seven members of the group have been killed in action. Fourteen are listed as missing in action.

1958 Appointment

During the presentation, the president was reminded that Captain Guilmartin, credited with 118 missions and five men saved, in HH-3Es, was nominated to the Air Force Academy in 1958 by then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson. Guilmartin is mar-

ried to Air Force Lt. Judith Ohr Guilmartin, an information officer at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida (where the captain is stationed) and an interested onlooker at the White House ceremony.

The citation, read by Secretary Brown, lauds the men of the 3rd Group for "exceptional gallantry in support of operations against an opposing armed force" and for "continually exposing themselves to hostile air and ground forces in accomplishing their mission".

President Johnson, in his statement, ended on this note: "We are proud to pay tribute . . . to the gallant men of the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group. Their courage and self-sacrifice have provided us with a glowing example of American manhood. They are a credit to a grateful nation. We salute them all."

Others who watched the ceremony included Air Force Secretary Harold Brown; Gen. John McConnell, Air Force chief of staff; Brig. Gen. George Boylan of the Military Airlift Command; Brig. Gen. Allison Brooks, commander of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, and Col. Arthur Beall, commanding officer of the 3rd Group during the period that led to the citation.

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PRESIDENTIAL



To Captain James Butera

With best wishes,

Dwight D. Eisenhower

PVC 1967.5P6

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