

Jolly Green Giants Earn Their Praise

By Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker (Ret.)

THE AIR FORCE deploys in Vietnam units of its Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS). Dr. Harold Brown, the able and perceptive Secretary of the Air Force, recently said of the ARRS detachments in Vietnam—affectionately called “the Jolly Green Giants” because they fly green helicopters:

“When a pilot is downed in the jungles of Vietnam, he is far more than just a human resource, a statistic, a part of our military strength. He is a fellow American, with a family at home, with hopes and dreams and a potential future that cannot be measured. Most immediately he is a man in trouble, and he needs help fast. That help is coming from the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service.”

While in Vietnam last month I visited the Jolly Green Giants, saw their battle-scarred planes and helicopters, met the modest, gallant crews and learned how they perform the astounding

feats which have won them more decorations than any other unit.

All air combat mission plans go promptly to the nearest ARRS detachment. A rescue team, usually composed of two helicopters and two A-1Es, moves up to the flying field nearest to the proposed path and as close as possible to the hostile target.

When a pilot is forced to parachute from a disabled aircraft, the rescue unit moves promptly into the area where he is reported to have landed. They fix the downed pilot's exact location by the signal equipment he carries, and a helicopter descends to tree-top height and lowers a cable. On the end of

this cable is a heavy metal spike enabling it to descend through the trees. This spike can be opened, unfolding arms like an anchor which become a seat for the rescued airman who is then hoisted aboard.

Often when the helicopter drops down for a pickup, it meets heavy enemy rifle and machine-gun fire. The helicopter is then forced to retire temporarily, and the accompanying A-1E fighters dive down to “hose” the area with their machine guns, bombs and napalm. The helicopter then moves in for another try. When one helicopter is crippled, a back-up Green Giant moves in.

When the flyer to be recovered reports by radio that he is wounded and cannot make his way to the cable end, a member of the rescue crew, a para-medical descends, locates the pilot, carries him to the cable and holds him on the cable-end seat until he is safely aboard the helicopter, often under enemy fire throughout the operation.

One rescued bomber pilot put it this way: “I never thought I would see anyone in this war to compare in my esteem with a Red Cross girl or an Air Force nurse, but my favorite pin-ups today are the crews of the Jolly Greens; but for them I would now be a guest in Hanoi Hilton (Red prison).”

My observations confirmed the judgment of Secretary Brown: “When the history of this war is finally written, I feel that the story of Air Rescue may well become one of the most outstanding human dramas in the entire history

Will Add to Problems

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ders, dependents must forego BX, commissary, and other benefits normally accorded an authorized dependent.

In addition, dependents without sponsors reportedly are required to pay local custom taxes on autos and household goods. Officials said these dependents can't go through custom lines set up for military dependents.

Those looking for jobs won't find the pay good, AF said. In many cases, dependents must work at a lower rate than citizens of the host country.

Air Force has written a regulation (AFR 211-9) to help handle the problem, but conditions vary so much by country it cannot pro-

Instead, the reg tells AFmen whose families are thinking of staying overseas to contact the base commander (or attache or counsel or commander of another service's unit, if necessary) nearest to the area involved for full details.

Among the countries where AF sources say dependents are having particular problems are the Philippines, Germany, Korea, and Turkey.

It can also be expensive just getting to an overseas location. The U.S. will pay for the shipment of household goods from one overseas area to the port of entry in another but additional costs from the port to an inland location is the responsibility of the family,