

AF, CG Rescue Pilot

HICKAM AFB, Hawaii--When the pilot of a single - engine Piper Cherokee, that ditched some 195 miles northeast of Oahu recently, was hoisted into a Rescue CH-3B helicopter it culminated the most extensive joint Air Force/Coast Guard rescue effort of the year.

Two pararescuemen, Sgt Gregory Wikel and Sgt Cole Panning, made the hazardous night parachute jump into the Pacific to aid Horace R. Byrd of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. The PJ's jumped from an HC - 130 aircraft of the 76th ARRSq that had been escorting the Cherokee since mid - afternoon. The rescue was coordinated by a Coast Guard C-130 also flying escort.

In addition to the two 130's and the CH-3 which made the pickup, another Rescue CH-3B was on the scene and two Coast Guard HH-52A helicopters from Barber's Point were positioned at Kaneohe MCAS as back-up.

The helicopter carrying Byrd and the two PJ's arrived at Hickam just two hours after the pickup. Byrd was taken to the base dispensary where he was found to be in good condition and was released. He was ferrying the new Cherokee from the factory on the mainland to the Philippines when he was forced to ditch in seas he and the PJ's described as "pretty rough".