

Pedro operations end at Kadena

KADENA AB, Okinawa -- Lt. Col. Roy L. Crawford, commander of the 33rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, announced late last month that October 4 would be the final day for HH-43 Pedro helicopter operations here.

More than twenty pilots, crew-chiefs, medical technicians and firemen are affected. They will be absorbed in other operations here at Kadena or reassigned.

The Pedros haven't been fully replaced by another helicopter, but the HH-3E Jolly Green Giants assigned to the 33rd will fly some of the missions formerly handled by the Pedros.

Kadena's two HH-43s were built approximately 10 years ago and will probably be retired from service.

The manufacturer's name for the HH-43 was "Husky" but, according to Colonel Crawford, the radio callsign "Pedro" eventually became the name rescue people around the world used for the chopper.

Fighter pilot taken from enemy jungle

NAKHON PHANOM RTAFB, Thailand -- "I saw a glint and felt a thump ... then there was fire and smoke and the plane went out of control. Everything was dark ...," recalled Marine 1st Lt. Darrell Borders, reflecting on the seconds just before he recently ejected from his stricken F-4 Phantom.

Three hours later amid a barrage of enemy fire, aircraft of the Air Force's 56th Special Operations Wing and 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron combined forces to pluck him from the mountainous North Vietnam jungle.

"It seemed like it took forever coming down," remembered the pilot. "I was drifting toward a river and an enemy village, so I pulled on one riser of the parachute which brought me down a lot faster."

The pilot landed in some bamboo near a ridge on a rugged mountain and his parachute hung up on some small trees. He stepped out of the chute and headed for cover.

Lieutenant Borders worked his way over the top of the slippery ridge to find a better hiding place.

"I kept thinking that I was leaving a trail as wide as a four-lane highway," he recalled.

Hours later, while Air Force A-1 Skyraiders from the 1st Special Operations Squadron suppressed enemy small arms fire, the first HH-53 helicopter began its approach.

As the crew attempted to pinpoint the survivor's location, their chopper was heavily damaged by enemy fire and one crew member was wounded, forcing them to pass rescue attempts to a nearby "Jolly Green."

As the second "Jolly" began hovering over the survivor, the enemy again opened fire. The pilot called for support and the A-1 Sandys rolled in, blanketing the area with ordnance.

"They laid down just about everything they had," remembered Capt.

Mike Swager, pilot of the rescue helicopter. But the intense barrage continued to pepper his aircraft.

"From the angle we were taking hits, it appeared that the enemy was very close to the downed pilot," he continued.

The flight engineer, SSgt. Herschel E. Fannin, was directing the pilot over the survivor and lowering the rescue seat when an enemy round severed his intercom line.

Realizing the problem, Sgt. Jim Cockerill, a photographer with the 601st Photo Squadron's Detachment 12, jumped to his feet and went forward to help.

Sticking his arm into the cockpit, he relayed the flight engineer's directions to the pilot by hand signals until voice communications could be restored.

"I was watching out the window to maintain a stable hover and reading hand signals to my left at the same time," explained the pilot.

Meanwhile, the penetrator cable had tangled in some bamboo. As the crew freed the rescue seat and prepared to lower it again for the pickup, the flight engineer noticed that the survivor was already on it and they quickly reeled him aboard.

As the helicopter departed the area, it was discovered that the fuel transfer system had been damaged. But a rendezvous with an Air Force tanker an hour later helped that problem and the Jolly headed home with the happy Marine hitchhiker.

Elmendorf PJs join international meet

By Sgt. Steve Gordenier

ELMENDORF AFB, Alaska -- Imagine if you will, a white disc, five inches in diameter, anchored to the ground in a circle of gravel 100 feet in diameter. Then, imagine that you must get in an airplane, fly 1500 feet above the circle, parachute out and land on the disc.

That task was recently presented to four parascuemen from Elmendorf's 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. The four PJs were participating in the First International Pararescue Competition held last month at a Canadian Forces base near Edmonton, Alberta.

The PJs were vying against rescue units from all over Canada for the Allison Cup awarded to the best international team.

Two teams represented the 71st Squadron. Team 1 was made up of A1C Larry Gullingsrud and TSgt. Jim Holloway. Team 2 consisted of Sgt. Kenneth Svoboda and TSgt. Trelawny Bruce.

Accuracy in dropping men was the key factor in determining the best team, simulating actual search operations where teams are dropped into isolated arctic or sub-arctic areas.

Competition rules called for the aircraft to fly over the drop zone at an altitude of 1500 feet. On the first pass, the jumpers were allowed to drop a weighted spotter chute or streamers to check the wind direction and strength.

On the second pass over the drop zone, the first member of the team goes out of the airplane at the signal of the jumpmaster.

On the third pass, the jumpmaster himself goes out the door to join his teammate -- hopefully in the gravel immediately surrounding the white disc.

The contestant's score is figured by measuring the distance from his first point of impact to the center of the disc. Together with his teammate's distance, that comprises the team score for that jump.

The American jumpers found the competition extremely tough as the Canadians landed again and again in the gravel surrounding the small disc.

On the first day of the competition, Airman Gullingsrud swooped to within 1.7 meters of the target for the best American performance of the day and

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