

Det. 8 ready for anything

TAKHLI RTAFB, Thailand -- "Wind 280 degrees at six knots. Estimated time to survivor is three minutes. Hoist operator begin hoist recovery checklist. Use the forest penetrator."

"Roger, going through the checklist." After about 60 seconds the checklist is completed and the pilot reports they are on a final approach to the survivor.

"Survivor is 12 O'clock, half-mile."

A few more seconds pass and then the hoist operator begins directing the pilot to the survivor after the pilot loses sight of him beneath the helicopter.

"Right five feet. Ok, forward. Right five feet. Forward. Forty feet from survivor. Thirty feet. Twenty feet. Ten five, four, three, two, one. Over survivor, hover. Penetrator going down. Survivor is in penetrator. Coming. Survivor in and secure, ready for takeoff."

With that the pilot adds power and the HH-43 helicopter quickly leaves the pick up site.

It was all realistic and it was just exactly what the men of Det. 8 of the 43rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron would do if they were called on to rescue a downed aircrew member.

This time, however, it was only a practice run and the survivor wasn't a person but a clump of dead grass near the flightline.

The men of Det. 8 have been at Takhlī for nearly eight weeks providing rescue and support operations for the U.S. Air Force and Thai units assigned to the base.

"Since we have been here, we have flown about as many support operations as we have rescue missions," Stated Maj. Harry E. Raisor, detachment Commander.

"We have flown people to Korat, located rail heads, looked for water leaks, flown the security police around the base looking for security positions and flown Thais to mountain tops to set up a security ring around the base."

Besides base support missions, the detachment has flown about 50 missions on rescue alert, it primary job. They've seen minor emergencies and the detachment has not been used for an actual rescue pick up.

Since they are on alert 24 hours a day, the detachment has one HH-43 ready to go at all times. With two aircraft the unit has not lost a minute of alert time due to maintenance.

"It usually takes only four minutes from the time the horn blows until we are in position hovering over the run - way," said Capt. Robert Ricketson.

"Many people think our only job is rescuing downed aircrew members," said Major Raisor. "We are on alert 24-hours a-day and are available for just about anything that might happen."

"The experience within our unit is at a high level," the major stated. "My people are not numbers or AFSCs but they are people. I am proud of what they are doing here. Everyone is enjoying what he is doing even though the job is boring at times."

"We are the first into an air base

and the last out. That's the way it should be. We have to be there in case something goes wrong, although we hope nothing does go amiss.

"There is one thing we all get a big reward from," Major Raisor said, "and that's seeing the look on a man's face just after we have rescued him with Pedro."



If somebody was stranded in the mountains, we'd go back with dogs to pick them up because in the Arctic, if you don't have equipment, you won't last long.

Mr. PJ talks rescue

CMSgt. Nicholas Klimis and the Military Airlift Command shared an anniversary in June. June was MAC's 24th Anniversary. It also marked the 24th year Chief Klimis served for MAC's Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service. The developer of modern pararescue techniques and especially noted for adapting scuba equipment for water rescue, Chief Klimis has earned the name "Mr. Pararescuer."

The son of a Greek sponge diver, Chief Klimis helped guide the rescue service from its infancy up to its present level of sophistication in Vietnam. Even up to his retirement, new ideas in rescue and rescue training had to cross his desk at ARRS Headquarters at Scott AFB before being approved.

In this MAC News Service interview upon his retirement, Chief Klimis talks about his early days in Rescue and the part he played in modernizing water rescue. (MNS Interview by Sgt Charles Wood)

MNS: Chief Klimis, why did you join the Air Force after serving with the U.S. Navy during World War II? Did you put in for a rescue assignment or did you get it by chance?

KLIMIS: Because of my previous diving experience as a boy, they thought I would be of service as a diver in Air Rescue Service. It intrigued me, so I enlisted.

MNS: At that time, there wasn't actually a Rescue Service was there?

KLIMIS: It just began. It was organized in 1947 and I enlisted in 1948. At that time, they were just recruiting people into the field, so I joined primarily as a lifeboat mechanic and diver, if necessary, for rescue work. My former AFSC from the Navy was gunner, so naturally I went into ordnance in support of the B-29s in bombing. I had eleven lifeboats to take care of. Then one day the NCOIC of the Rescue school, which was just being organized, looked me over. I climbed the vertical ropes straight up, you know, and he says, "How would you like to go to school?" I said OK, so I was recruited for pararescue.

MNS: How was pararescue training different back in 1948 from today?

KLIMIS: It's more professional now. In 1948 it lacked directives and control. Right now, it has specific guidance. It's more organized and more sophisticated because of the more complicated aircraft and so forth. Back then, the first objective was to jump. How you jumped was up to you. It created more initiative with the individual at that time because everybody was conscious of just going out and rescuing somebody. How they did it -- it was by whatever means they could. Today, it requires sophisticated airplanes and different requirements. For example



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- scuba was introduced in 1960 and it put pararescue into a broader field for recovery.
- MNS: At first, when you jumped in an ocean rescue, you didn't have scuba gear?
- KLIMIS: Right. Our water capability was very limited because of lack of equipment, exposure suits and training. Actually, our water capability up to 1960 was almost nil. Very few rescues were accomplished then. We tried to get the person needing help to help himself rather than have air rescue assistance.
- MNS: You mean you just pushed the lifeboat out the door?
- KLIMIS: In 1960, when the recovery program in NASA was introduced, we were asked to come up with a prototype method to handle the water recovery. Rescue initiated the organized scuba capability in 1960 to support the Mercury Program. We came up with designed equipment and procedures. Fortunately, we had some of the old troops in the system and they were used to the maximum of their ability to come up with this capability. We finally solidified all the equipment and put it into standard Air Force stock issue.
- MNS: Let's get back to your early career. What was your first assignment after rescue school?
- KLIMIS: After completing the pararescue training in 1948, my first assignment was Goose Bay, Labrador.
- MNS: You did a lot of Arctic jumping?
- KLIMIS: We did a dropping of para-dogs, Arctic recovery missions of stranded people and we jumped in crashes, if somebody was stranded in the mountains, we'd go back with the dogs to pick them up because in the Arctic, if you don't have equipment, you won't last long. Jumping into the water was out of the question. The year 1949 was when I jumped from the helicopter up there.
- MNS: Do you still remember the first rescue mission?
- KLIMIS: We jumped in a crash up in either Dakota or Canada. Rescue to us at that time was not necessarily just parachuting. You could go out and pick up people by any means. For instance, the young boy at Goose Bay that tried to commit suicide -- I think that was the most gratifying rescue I made because I got there in time to pick this kid out of the cold water.
- MNS: How do you feel after a rescue like that?
- KLIMIS: Oh, it's fantastic. Really, it's real nice because it's all worthwhile. I think that's really what makes rescue guys go.
- MNS: Did you feel the same way after your last rescue as you did after your very first one?
- KLIMIS: Yes, it gave me a sense of accomplishment, a purpose. You have to have a driving interest in this work. This is the thing that keeps you together. It's like going into combat every time.

Air Force Pedro saves Marines from sea

DA NANG AFD, RVN — An HH-43 Pedro of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron plucked two U.S. Marine Corps A-4 crewmembers from the South China Sea. The Pedro, piloted by Capt. Robert R. Ames, was launched when the Marines, Capt. William E. Ransbottom and CWO 2 Bruce E. Bolts, radioed that they were losing hydraulic pressure and would attempt an emergency landing here.

The Pedro was prepared to extinguish a blaze and rescue the aircrew should they crash off-base.

However, as the A-4 slowed below 140 knots, Captain Ransbottom could not maintain control of the aircraft and eject.

Captain Ames said that at that point he left his 1,000-pound fire suppression kit at the end of the runway and followed the crippled aircraft to a point 10 miles out to sea, approximately 8 miles southeast of Da Nang.

We saw the aircraft impact in the water," Captain Ames said, "and about two minutes later we picked up the chutes."

The Pedro aircraft commander said it had to be one of the fastest overwater pickups ever. One crewmember was out of the sea within three minutes, and within three more, the second Marine was aboard.

Members of the Pedro crew in addition to Captain Ames were: Capt. Michael F. Schmidt, Copilot; Staff Sergeants David C. Newman, and Michael J. Kondask, firefighters; and Sgt. Larry Johnson, medical technician.

PJ returns to states after 50 months in SEA

After 50 months, three Distinguished Flying Crosses and 22 Air Medals, SSgt. Charles D. Morrow, a pararescuer (PJ) with the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, is leaving Southeast Asia for a tour in the states.

The sergeant is a veteran of more than 1,000 combat hours. In all, Sergeant Morrow has 1,500 flying hours in the H-3, HH-53 and C-130 aircraft.

Sergeant Morrow is credited with saving eight lives. He has participated in 50 combat rescue missions, 14 of which he was part of the pick up crew.

"The greatest thing about my job," observed the Sergeant, "is that every time I've picked up a crewmember, a family was united. It really does give a guy a fantastic feeling," he said.



THE RESCUE FORCE IS READY

An HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, is escorted on search and rescue operations over South East Asia by A-1 Skyraiders. The A-1s also provide protective fire cover in hostile areas while the helicopter picks up downed aircrews. (USAF Photo)