

The PJ as a medic

By
ARRS Staff Surgeon

Ever wonder why a PJ wears a maroon-colored beret—rather than a blue one, or green or black? It's because certain colors signify certain career fields or areas of specialization in the military.

Maroon is the color of medicine. That makes a good point; PJs are primarily medics. We've made a lot of other things out of them, too — parachutists, scuba divers, mountain climbers, survival experts, gunners, etc. But their most important skill is medical.

The medical program of pararescue is complex and demanding. The pararescue capability, as defined in ARRS manual 55-1, is to deliver

competent emergency medical care (and the appropriate survival expertise) to any remote area on the face of the earth. To do this, a highly specialized subsystem of medical equipment and procedures has been developed.

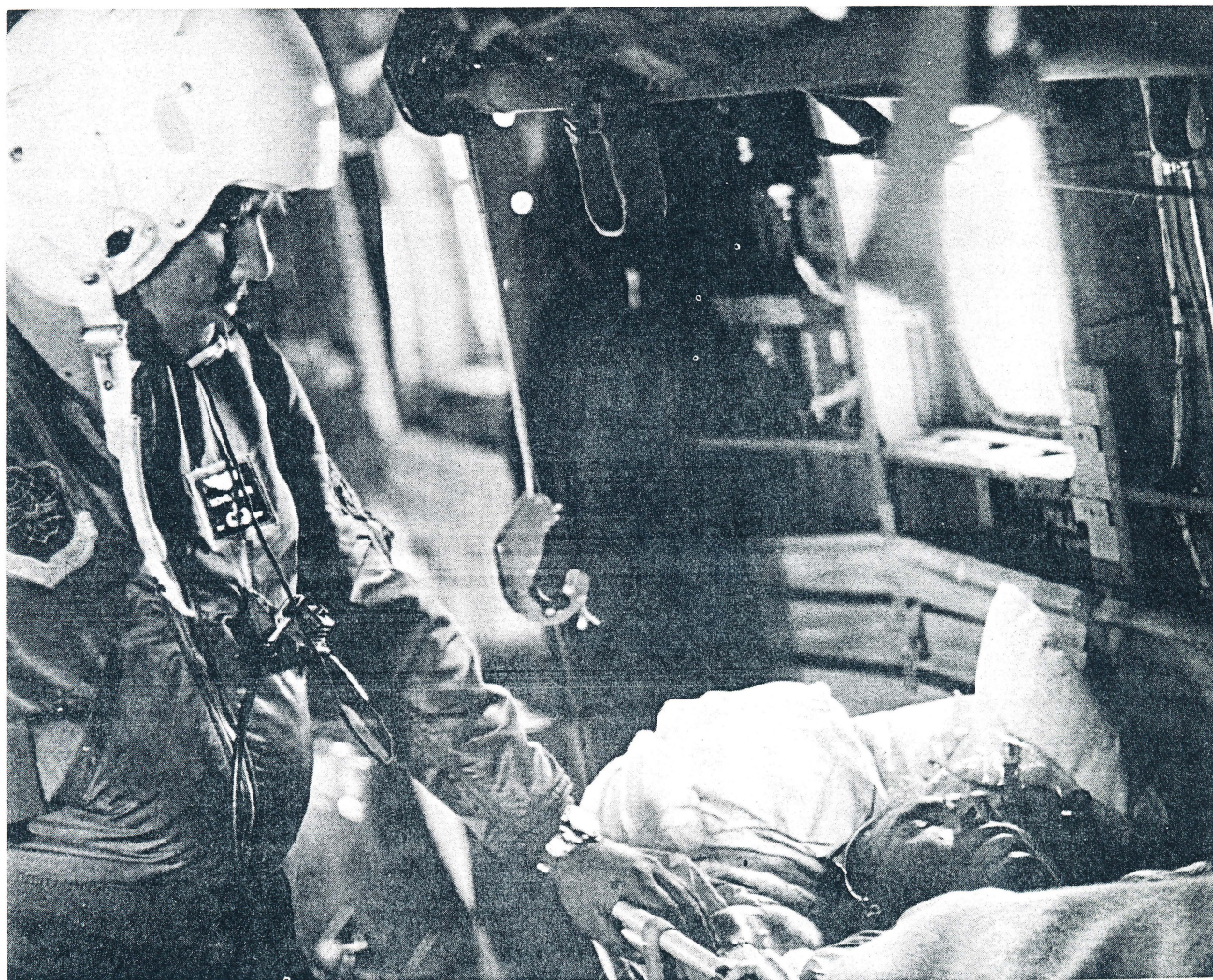
Its medics, the PJs, must have sufficient medical training to be able to function essentially as independent duty emergency medical technicians.

Their professional knowledge must run the full gamut of medical contingencies. They must know mass trauma and exposure cases to the emergencies of old age such as heart attack and stroke; from metabolic disorders such as diabetic shock to unscheduled childbirth.

That's a pretty tall order, and a significant capability. And it requires a lot of the PJs' time for training and for maintenance of their medical equipment. Currency is a key concept in medicine just as it is in aviation. PJs need to maintain a level of medical currency (ARRS manual 55-11) just as they maintain aircrew currency.

Their medical training should include actual clinical experience in the local base medical facility as well as academic training.

So, the next time you notice one of those distinctive maroon berets, don't think of parachuting, or scuba diving, etc. Think medicine. That's what it is really all about.



THE PJ AS A MEDIC — Pain and suffering, at times even death, can be the visible reward of the PJ in his role as a medic. Knowing medicine helps him fight back.

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