

3ARRG-P CLOSE OUT HISTORY

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FOREWARD

(U) This history marks the completion of nearly 22 years of humanitarian service by the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group (3 ARRG) and its predecessor organizations. The beginning of the 3 ARRG came with the activation of 3rd Emergency Rescue Squadron on 15 February 1944. The unit was deactivated on 18 June 1957, following the Korean War and was reactivated at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, on 14 December 1965. As USAF activities in RVN were curtailed, the 3 ARRG was relocated at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand. As activities were further curtailed in Thailand, the 3 ARRG was relocated at U-Tapao RTNAB, Thailand, and then deactivated on 31 January 1976, following the departure of the tactical forces in Thailand.

(U) During this period, there were no actual combat search and rescue missions. Search and rescue activity was primarily devoted to emergency medical evacuation missions and search and rescue training exercises. The humanitarian service provided by the search and rescue forces in medical evacuation missions, and the high level of proficiency maintained through numerous training exercises, enabled our personnel to uphold the rescue motto "THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE."

CLEVELAND E. FORRESTER, Lt Colonel, USAF
Commander

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APPENDIX III

"THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE"

THE END OF AN ERA

The 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, the most decorated unit in the Air Force, was officially inactivated at U-Tapao Royal Thai Naval Base, Thailand, 31 January 1976, concluding a history of lifesaving missions which began in 1944.

The unit, which has been credited with over 14,000 "saves," was initially designated as the 3rd Emergency Rescue Squadron on 14 February 1944. Though the name was to change many times through the years, the mission and the highly professional and courageous manner in which it has been performed, remained constant. During its history, the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, and its subordinate units, have been awarded 34 campaign streamers and 13 decorations, with three final decorations pending for the evacuations of Phnom Penh and Saigon, and the recovery of the merchant ship "Mayaguez."

The history of the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group is filled with many acts of courage. Through three major wars the 3rd has been a living symbol of the rescue motto "THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE." Some of the missions have become legendary, while others remain testaments to the constant devotion of rescue forces to the rescue motto.

The 3rd Emergency Rescue Squadron recorded its first combat rescue on 17 September 1944, when an OA-10 "Catalina" amphibious aircraft recovered two Navy fliers during the invasion of the Philippines.

A particularly daring mission occurred Christmas Eve, 1950, when an H-5 helicopter shuttled deep into North Korean territory to fly out 35 liberated POWs. For its actions during the six month period ending Christmas Day, the 3rd received its first Distinguished Unit Citation.

Speed into action is probably the most important factor concerning successful combat rescue. In Korea, this was exemplified when Capt Joseph M. McConnel, who was to become the top ace of the Korean War with 16 victories, was rescued off the North Korean coast seconds after he hit the water.

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A total of 9898 UN personnel were rescued by the 3rd Air Rescue Group (redesignated November 1952). Of the total, 996 were recovered behind enemy lines. For this outstanding combat rescue record, the 3rd won the first Presidential Unit Citation of the Korean War.

The 3rd Rescue Group served a peacetime mission, searching for downed fliers and distressed ships, until its deactivation on 18 June 1957.

A different war and world greeted the reactivated and newly designated 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, 8 January 1966, at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of South Vietnam. Supported by the old rescue stalwart, the HU-16 "Albatross" amphibian, the HH-43 "Pedro" and the HH-3E "Jolly Green Giant" helicopters made their first rescue appearance, recording eight "saves" in their first month of activity. The HC-130P "King" aircraft was also an early 3rd resource, and in December 1967, the first HH-53 "Super Jolly Green Giant" helicopters appeared, accounting for more than 110 recoveries in less than two years. With these resources and able assistance from sister services, the 3rd served as Seventh Air Force's rescue arm in Southeast Asia. It was a period of unmatched valor for rescue forces as combat rescue became a daily occurrence. During the conflict in Southeast Asia, 3,900 "saves" were credited, of which 2,679 occurred during combat situations.

With the termination of American military involvement in Vietnam, the 3rd moved to Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, 15 February 1973. A gradual reduction of rescue forces was begun.

With the Spring of 1975, final withdrawal rumors appeared to be coming true, and the 3rd continued a step by step phasedown of its resources. However, an epilogue to the rescue story in Southeast Asia was still forthcoming.

With the collapse of the Phnom Penh government and the Khmer Rouge takeover in Cambodia imminent, HH-53s and HC-130s combined to rescue 285 personnel from the Cambodian capital. Within weeks after the successful completion of this effort, 3rd forces became involved in what was to become one of the largest air evacuations in history; the removal of over 7,000 refugees from Saigon. HH-53s were deployed to a US aircraft carrier off the coast of Vietnam,

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and for two days they shuttled back and forth carrying refugees. Then on 15 May, shortly after the SS Mayaguez had been seized by the Cambodians, the 3rd forces deployed and retrieved US Marines through fierce, hostile fire in the same dedicated manner which had won them the respect of three generations of US fighting men. During this operation, 156 "saves" were recorded to bring the number of "saves" credited during the Vietnam era to over 4,000.

Accompanying the closure of Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, the 3rd transferred operations to U-Tapao Royal Thai Naval Base, Thailand, where final phasedown of rescue forces in Southeast Asia was completed.

On 31 January 1976, Lt Colonel Cleveland E. Forrester, the last 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group Commander, cased the unit flag and officially terminated an era of valor and unparalleled service by the many brave and dedicated airmen and support personnel who lived and died for their fellow man, "THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE."



CAN'T STAND TO WATCH seems the attitude of Pedro, left, canine mascot of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, as the last HH-43 "Pedro" helicopter leaves the base for its new home, Det. 5, 40th, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand. Pedro the mascot remained with the 40th "awaiting orders." (U.S. Air Force photo by SSgt. Boyd Belcher).

Last 'Pedros' depart NKP for Udorn duty

NAKHON PHANOM RTAFB, THAILAND — Ninety combat saves, 71 non-combat saves, eight medical evacuations, and five years from the time HH-43 "Pedro" helicopters became part of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here, they were withdrawn to reduce costs.

The end of the "Pedro era" here did not stop the faithful aircrafts' service in Thailand however. They were reassigned to the 40th's Detachment Five at Udorn RTAFB.

Pedros also are used at Detachment 12, U-Tapao RTAFB. The transfer is part of a force realignment and HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopters will now do the jobs formerly done by "Pedros."

The last "Pedro" mission here, the movement of the aircraft to Udorn, was flown by Maj. Curtis K. Bayer, Capt. Ronald H. Whitehead and Sgt. James R. Gillette; 1st Lt. Brian D. Roesch, 2nd Lt. Michael R. Wetzel and SSgt. Lawrence Rosen.



RESCUE *Review*

AEROSPACE RESCUE AND RECOVERY SERVICE

Vol. 1, No. 6

Headquarters, ARRS, Scott AFB, IL

May 1975



PREPARATION for the departure of the last HH-43 "Pedro" helicopters from Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, takes place. Pedro missions now will be done by HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopters. See story on page 4). (U.S. Air Force photo by SSgt. Boyd Belcher)

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