

SAREX HISTORY

SAREX, as its known now, had its beginning in Canada in 1964 as a Pararescue competition. Each rescue unit would have a jump-off at home and send the scores to the 103d Rescue Unit at Greenwood, Nova Scotia. The overall results would be tallied and reported to the field by newsletters.

Due to keen competition, increasing interest, and the many dead centers reported in this proxy-style competition, it was decided to hold the competition for all teams in one location. Trenton CFB, Ontario was selected in 1967 as the first location for the Pararescue Competition.

In the beginning, the fun of jumping was emphasized as much or more than the accuracy. An interchange of ideas, techniques, and increased proficiency resulted from watching the other teams and the informal gatherings. The sites for the competition were determined by who won, until 1973 when a rotation system was started.

The USAF was first invited in 1972, and the 71 ARRS, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska was arbitrarily selected as the United States representative. Held at Nameo CFB, Edmonton, Alberta, the 1972 competition took on an international and expensive flavor. In Canada all expenses were borne by the rescue specialists through raffles, cake sales, and other fund-raising activities.

In 1973, a jump-off was held between most USAF regular wings and the two fixed-wing reserve units; the winner, the 303 ARRS, March AFB, CA competed at Summerside, Prince Edward Island.

A trial medical exercise was held in Trenton in 1974 and adopted as part of the competition in 1975. In 1976, the US hosted its first Pararescue Competition at Eglin AFB, FL. In order for the US teams to continue competing, the name of the competition had to be changed to Search and Rescue Exercise, or SAREX for short.

To more fully involve the crews of the drop aircraft and to keep in tune with the SAREX name, a search exercise was instituted in 1976 at Eglin AFB, FL.

Since 1976, the competition has been alternated between Canada and the US, slowly growing in size and complexity. Some of the benefits of the interaction of the two rescue organizations include exposure to the interchange of equipment, jumpmastering techniques, cargo drop procedures, PJ deployment procedures, search techniques, medical treatment techniques, opening of the USAF Pararescue Advanced Medical Course to Canadian PJs, and a chance for younger PJs to talk directly with other pararescuemen who have had many years of operational experience.

The competition continues to instill the drive in a pararescueman or SAR technician to be a perfectionist, to increase his ability and accuracy as a jumper, and to quickly, efficiently, and professionally treat a survivor.