

Copies of *My Thoughts On Pararescue* were made and handed out at the 1976 PJ NCOIC Conference, at HQ ARRS. The writing was **in response to a directive "to come prepared" to the conference by writing down problems and recommended solutions.** At the time I wrote the analysis, I knew very well that I would get no sympathy from HQ personnel, and that someone might lower the hammer onto me. They did.

I received NO official comments or reply on my submittal papers. Verbal comments received from many conference attendees indicated general agreement. However, the staff apparently was highly upset. **HQ had announced that we were no longer in the humanitarian aspect of the mission.** My ARRS HQ presentation of experienced problems was followed by umpteen pages filled with specific recommendations for improving the Pararescue situation in 1976. No one at the HQ level wanted to hear or talk about it. Instead, for nearly four out of five conference days, we had to discuss the justification for utilization of HC-130 in combat behind enemy lines, how PJs would be used on the HC-130 in a combat zone! That was in 1976 when the whole country wanted no talk about war! Nuts!

Subsequently, my analysis and remedy proposal caused my replacement as the NCOIC Pararescue, 71 ARRS, by CMSgt John Tobey (directed by General Saunders). While at HQ's, I was not told of the switch. I found this out as soon as I returned to Elmendorf from a two-striper PJ. Consequently, I removed myself from the career field because the battle to be fought would be too much for just one individual. The local FSO signed my removal from hazard duty, based on results of previously sustained injuries and signs of impaired heart condition.

My Thoughts On Pararescue

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One of our great presidents, John F. Kennedy, coined the words to guide a nation by: **"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask, what you can do for your country!"** I took the liberty and rephrased it to the spirit of Pararescue, as I knew how pararescuemen felt from the early 1950's in their service to aid people in distress: **"Ask not what Pararescue can do for you! Ask, what you can do for Pararescue and humanity!"** I had thought and lived by this slogan long before Kennedy took office. Even today, I know many PJ's, young and old, who think and live: **"RESCUE!"** Currently it appears, the environment of Pararescue stifles and confuses the most ardent PJ's. Something is wrong. Basically, the adverse condition is created by the overloading with too many requirements, too many restrictions, and too much paperwork. To analyze all the requirements and directives which govern Pararescue activities, must soon come to the conclusion that Pararescue is expected to 'stuff twenty pounds of beans into a bag with a five pound capacity'.

As I see it, this overloading is the result of many influencing factors over the years. All were developed in the realm of good intentions and out of necessity. For a period of time, such overloading can be carried without repercussion or injury. But, for a continuing period of time, the load must be limited to its carrying-capacity or the fuse will blow. Screwing in of new fuses is not the remedy. A safe and efficient workload is the answer. Then, in the time of urgent need for special capabilities, the pararescueman is mentally and physically ready to cope successfully with the new, adverse and strenuous task or tasks (as it happened in Korea in the 50's, in the space program of the 60's, and in South East Asia in the 60's and 70's).

Since the late 40's, pararescuemen have proven themselves as a valuable asset of the USAF during war and peace times. Their record (officially and unofficially) of aiding injured and saving human lives, cannot be discredited by the most ardent opponent of Pararescue. But, as in many other historical cases, one cannot live and build on his record alone – there must be a purpose and a need to serve as a foundation for a sound structure. To me, it is obvious that Pararescue still has a purpose and still is needed in peace and in war.

In sound planning for rescue and recovery operations in which the pararescueman must play a roll, one must definitely include the **human factor** as a consideration. One must consider what makes a good pararescueman tick, and what makes him to do unique and outstanding things, as he is expected to do. One must consider that he must be kept highly motivated and dedicated to obtain maximum return on investments. One must consider that such individual cannot be turned on and off like a machine. He is expected to, and he can, do many things unrelated to each other under great stress and most adverse conditions. He is, and must be treated, as an elite Armed Forces member!

Throughout military history of many nations, an elite force, which produced the desired and planned results, was always treated with special considerations. Wise military strategists knew what it would take and what a man can do when he was called to do a special job under sever circumstances. A job which required the employment of sound decisions, good judgment, dedication and a thorough knowledge by the selected individual. Such individual was not and cannot be expected to do all the "common things" which are required for the average and general military member. If he would, then there would be never enough time for him to concentrate on his primary assigned duties. He soon would become diluted by too many unrealistic (even though important) requirements. he would become superficial, complacent, and unreliable.

In essence, this is what happened to the pararescueman. He was considered (or still is) part of an elite force. But, from many different sources and positions, 'beans' were stuffed into his bag beyond any reasonable capacity. The beans he can handle are those

outlined in Chapter 2, ARRSR 55-11, Pararescue Operational Regulation. The beans which created the overload were primarily those put in by the **aircrew member requirements**. A wide array of other **general military requirements** also diluted the time available for concentration on the duties and job knowledge. He became "**The Jack of All Trades**". He must be "**The Master of His Trade**", if money, time, manpower and resources are expected to be spent wisely.

Dedication to a cause makes and keeps the professional pararescueman. He must maintain a **rescue sentiment to perform beyond the call of duty** — as it is so often had been required of a pararescueman. This required dedication and rescue sentiment, which is so important to maintaining a capable and efficient pararescue force, lies virtually at the mercy of higher headquarter personnel.

Why have recently so many **good** pararescuemen left the career field long before their time was up? Mainly because of frustrations encountered while trying to do the job they were told to do, or the job they had to do for Pararescue and the cause. In many cases, their job was made nearly impossible by the work load, by frustrations with too many directives, too much paperwork, too many nitty-gritty requirements having little or no meaning for Pararescue, and countless other adversities making it most difficult to cope with for an extended period of time. This should have been realized by the countless visits of headquarter and wing personnel at the lower echelons. Yes, many sympathized with the PJ NCOIC's and PJ's, but real help did not come. Maybe once in a while, a little help here and there, but never enough to really improve the situation. Was it because there are simply too many positions higher up, too much "red tape" to cope with before something can be done?

Under the present circumstances, it is no privilege to be the NCOIC of a composite Pararescue Section — especially in Alaska. Always under the gun; always under pressure; never pleasing everyone; never able to do all the things he knows he must do to 'keep the wagon on the trail and out of the ruts'; always in the middle of controversies; all the responsibilities, but little real authority; always: "You be damned if you do, and you be damned if you don't!" Little time for self-improvement courses; little time for family matters; no shortages of daily criticism or skepticism by people who wanted to see things done their way. Well, let's face it: Someone has to do the job; but, whoever is doing it, must be able to see some light in the tunnel! This "light" is not just in way of guidance, but must also be a light of confidence and encouragement. An NCOIC must be given the 'tools and soil suitable to cultivate a good crop'. He has been assigned to raise and maintain a certain crop; then he must also have protection from factors which either weaken, sicken or destroy his crop. He alone cannot do it without understanding and help from higher headquarters.

Take the Alaska PJ Team as an example. We have twenty-two authorized; there are twenty-one PJ's assigned. All want to do the job for which they volunteered: The aid of injured and the saving of human lives. military or civilian. They all know that in order to do the job properly, they must have good training in all the essential areas of required knowledge. Not only initial familiarization and training, but **continuous constructive training, especially advanced medical training.**

The 71st Pararescue team currently has the support of two flight surgeon, 21 TFW Elmendorf USAF hospital. On one day each week, one of them appears in the section for lecture, pertinent questions and answers. However, due to having only a few PJs present, while others are on at least three TDY assignments or elsewhere detained, this type support is insufficient. Furthermore, it is not possible to send one or more PJs TDY for a week or two to be active in the hospital emergency room to obtain additional pertinent knowledge. In the 1960s, when I was NCOIC 305th PJ Team Selfridge AFB MI, I had made arrangement with the Detroit General Hospital, where two PJs on two-week TDY worked in the emergency room and gained valuable medical experience.

Out on the incident scene, the pararescueman is on his own. He carries a very high responsibility for the safety, rescue and recovery of others. To make sound and timely decisions as required by his assigned duties, requires sound training and a degree of experience in order to avoid unnecessary and costly mistakes. Time for such required continuation training is presently not available. Nevertheless, on occasions, time is made available for certain constructive training; but it is not available to train all PJ's in all essential areas of required knowledge on a continuing basis. The assigned PJ's know what their requirements are in order to be professional pararescuemen in Alaska. They must be given the opportunity, but not just on paper, but in reality.

They know that in the **medical area** alone, it takes continuous training to stay proficient because of its great variety of subject matters. They know that the Alaskan environment, terrain and climate can be detrimental to the unprepared and untrained, even to the semi-prepared and semi-trained! They know that a pararescueman's primary mission utilization is intended to be on the surface, that parachuting is just a means to get to the scene, that the aircraft is only a platform to bring him near the scene. But look at the real situation of their current employment: It is just the other way around!

Basically that is what makes it tough for an NCOIC of a composite squadron PJ section; he knows what his people want and need, but he is restricted by directives and regulations to what he can give them in line of daily tasks. He knows what it takes to motivate his people, and he is trying his best to do so. But, he also knows that he is constantly 'swimming up the stream' unless drastic changes are made in the program.

General Considerations:

Prior to effecting changes in the existing structure of the pararescue environment and activities, and effecting changes to the existing currency requirements, one must **first evaluate and determine the required mission and role of Pararescue** for now and for the future.

Determine, if it is practical and workable, if **all** pararescuemen need to be qualified and current for world-wide utilization and mobility, or would it be more in the interest of the Air Force to **have only one or two units ready for instant world-wide mobility**, and the **other units** would select their **required priorities of Pararescue capabilities for their area of responsibility**.

Then determine the tasks and duties required for a **continuously** efficient and capable Pararescue force on the basis of requirements as it can be **reasonably expected** under average circumstances. In the selection of tasks and duties, it must be computed **how much** one person can be expected to be trained in, can efficiently retain, and is able to accomplish on a **continuing basis**. **Don't overlook the Human Factor!** Keep in mind that a highly motivated and dedicated individual is capable and willing to handle additional demands, no matter how risky, adverse or difficult, as they pop up on occasions. But, if it is on a continuing basis, such environment would overtax any individual. This, without a doubt, is the current situation of Pararescue,

Of course, much depends on how much money, time, manpower, and resources are available or can be made available. This is in itself a limiting factor; but, it should be no grounds for discouragement for continuing and rebuilding a noble American institution: Pararescue.

In the selection of tasks and duties, also include a selection of priorities from the highest to the lowest. This will be an effective tool for the NCOIC as well as each pararescueman to perform assigned tasks and duties in a most efficient manner. It will enable the NCOIC to place his priorities of tasks ahead of other constantly appearing additional tasks and requirements imposed on him from "outside" authorities. It would greatly reduce the frequent aggravations and frictions a NCOIC encounters with the operations officer, training officer, and other personnel.

Then, seriously consider where all the extensively **experienced** Pararescue NCOs are currently located, and if the proper balance exists between the amount of experienced NCOs in the field, and those at positions such as headquarters, wings, PJ-school, and other special locations. The conclusion must obviously be that currently too many of our "elite" are sitting in other than field positions, that too little **true leadership experience** is out in the field — 'leadership', not job knowledge and proficiency!

It might be a wise move to drastically reduce the other-than-field locations requirement for experienced, higher-ranking NCOs to provide the working units with badly needed expertise. At least, as long as it takes to bring unit expertise up to the minimum requirements. This would reduce the time factor of trial-and-error methods, which would be the case in several units. It would reduce cost and accident possibilities.

For the Alaska operation alone, PJs currently in the Pararescue career field, sufficiently experienced and knowledgeable to **teach and train** others in pertinent subject area requirements, are a very limited resource. The ARRS Reserve units hold a few of the aces. It might be considered to request particular individuals for special duty tours to help out in Alaska.

In essence: After the tasks and duties have been established, it must be established who is doing what duty where, to fill the vacancies. If the working field locations cannot function properly because of lack of expertise manning, then all the "experts" at higher levels serve no useful functions.

Also consider the need for a Pararescue school¹. A young man, fresh out of basic training, with a Pararescue indoctrination course, extensive medical schooling, jump/survival/scuba schools behind him, should be ready to enter Pararescue training at unit level (composite squadron). This would be especially feasible in view of drawing expert pararescuemen, performing school instructor duties, to field locations, where they are now needed. It was successfully done some time ago.

It is also **not** out of the question to consider manning field units with Rescue and Survival Technicians (proportional) to assist in survival, escape and evasion continuation training of pararescuemen. There was once a very well working program: Combination of "ground rescue" and "para rescue" personnel in one section. The Ground Rescuemen were basically utilized as support for Pararescue. Think about it.

Give the pararescueman the chance to love his job all the time Let him love it because of the nature and mission of his job, not because of the special pay and special uniform!

¹ In 1976, many experienced PJs either had left the career field (for one or the other reason) or had indicated that they were "getting out". There was a great shortage of experienced team leaders. Many of the still-serving master sergeants and technical sergeants had received rapid promotion while on several consecutive SEA tours; they had plenty of combat experience, but little or virtually no practical management and leadership experience.