

8Dec85 Robert O'Dell KLOD

On this day in ARS history SSgt Robert M. O'Dell was killed on a night HALO jump. Sergeant O'Dell was one of sixteen PJs which composed a USAF mobile training team (MTT) instructing MAC Course 11000-003 Military Freefall HGRP. This team was given the mission of training all USAF Pararescuemen in High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) parachuting using the MT-1X High Glide Ratio Parachute. The MTT was organized and trained in the last half of 1984 and used a new freefall training method known as AFF (Accelerated Freefall). Sergeant O'Dell was one of only 16 USAF personnel certified by the United States Parachute Association to train students using AFF. The MTT began training PJs at Eglin AFB in April 1985 and continued until all Pararescuemen had been trained in December 1985. Twenty students were trained in each class and each class lasted 14 duty days. Graduates of this course received USA HALO cards.

Incredibly, Sergeant O'Dell died on the last pass, of the last jump, of the last class, of PJ freefall HGRP students scheduled to be trained. Bob collided with another jumper while in freefall. It is suspected that he was knocked unconscious because there was no evidence that he attempted to pull either his main or reserve ripcord. The cause of death was impact with the ground. Bob's MT-1XI parachute was not equipped with an automatic opener. The MT-1XI was used only by MTT instructors and it was essentially a sport parachute which used a hand deploy main canopy. The instructors used these rigs instead of MT-1X parachutes because AFF training required this type equipment.

The other jumper involved in this mid air collision opened his parachute and landed safely.

SSgt Robert O'Dell was assigned to the 67th ARRS, RAF Woodbridge UK. His remains were buried in the United Kingdom.

Let each of us take a moment to remember Bob on this day in ARS history.