



DoD PERSONNEL RECOVERY CONFERENCE GENERAL JOHN HANDY

Tuesday, 23 Jan 01
The Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Arlington, VA

I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this morning. When I look at Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), though, I must say that, as a C-130 guy, my idea of a good CSAR plan is one with four engines. In all seriousness, I'm happy to be here. This conference is important, because Personnel Recovery is such an inherently joint and combined activity. To do it well, we must share information, discuss problems, and highlight best practices from throughout this community.

As you're well aware, this is a truly vast community! Personnel Recovery encompasses a sobering range of responsibilities: from bringing our warriors back alive, to making sure we properly account for those who make that ultimate sacrifice.

Just last month, I participated in a ceremony at Camp Pendleton honoring American and Allied Korean War Veterans who fought in the Chosin Reservoir Campaign. The ceremony marked the campaign's 50th anniversary. Chosin will always hold an important place in our nation's military history—in large part because we fought and survived two vicious opponents. The first was a combined force of North Korean and Chinese troops that outnumbered our forces at least six to one. The second was the weather. With temperatures dropping to almost forty below zero, 3,000 of the 12,000 U.S., British, and South Korean casualties were from severe frostbite.

While at Camp Pendleton, the epic stories I heard of personal courage and sacrifice reminded me how important it is to capture these experiences on paper. This act of documenting our veterans' selfless service is one of the greatest ways I think we honor our veterans, and, at the same time, remind our nation of the cost of war.

The Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) also honors our servicemen and women as it continues its fight to properly account for each and every one of our combat veterans. Having seen the proud faces of thousands of our Korean War veterans at Camp Pendleton, I can tell you that your actions truly do make a difference! I want to personally thank Bob Jones and all of DPMO for this often unrecognized service to our nation.

As your opening speaker today, you'll be happy to hear that I in no way intend to cover the full breadth of Personnel Recovery. During my short time with you, I'd like to focus on the state of CSAR in the Air Force. I promise to move quickly, in order to leave time for your questions.

My message today is that CSAR is an integral part of our expeditionary aerospace force. Our CSAR rebuild is almost complete and we are beginning to see the benefits.

Before launching into the present, though, I'd like to look back in time for a brief moment. For any CSAR pessimists in the crowd, there's plenty of history to support your skepticism. It seems that we in the Air Force have had a bad habit of unlearning CSAR lessons over the years.

Shortly after the end of the Korean War, the Air Force's Air Rescue Service had almost 8,000 personnel and fifty squadrons. By 1961, the ARS was reduced to 1,600 people and 11 squadrons. More dramatic, though, was our ARS's change in focus over that same period. During Korea, the Air Rescue Service saved 254 airmen who went down inside enemy territory. Unbelievably, just five years later, in 1958, ARS issued the following directive that clearly erased the Korean experience: "ARS will be organized, manned, equipped, trained, and deployed to support peacetime air operations. No special units or specially designed aircraft will be provided for the sole purpose of wartime search and rescue. Wartime rescue operations will be dictated by the capabilities of equipment used for peacetime SAR..." How about that for taking the "C" out of CSAR?

Korea marked the first boom and bust cycle for Air Force CSAR, but certainly not the last. One of our proudest periods for Air Force CSAR was at the end of Vietnam. At that point in time, the Air Force's Air Rescue and Recovery Service was the world's most capable and experienced combat rescue force--having saved 4,120 lives (2,780 of those being combat saves). Then came the dark ages, *again*. CSAR's decline within the Air Force, during the 1980s, paralleled a rapid growth in special operations forces. This time, the cause reflected our nation's increased interest in combating terrorism.

Following that cycle, the 1990's should have been a decade of unquestioned recovery for Air Force CSAR. Instead, a high operational tempo complicated our planned recovery, as we struggled to meet a variety of responsibilities--including NORTHERN WATCH, SOUTHERN WATCH, and the Balkans. Don't you hate it when reality interferes with a good plan? Well, one of the things we discovered along the way was that a good plan on paper for two major theater wars does not translate well to meet multiple smaller contingencies. Many of you here today experienced the difficulty and frustration of turning around Air Force CSAR while our operational demands remained high.

Today I'm happy to say that the Air Force has finally taken CSAR off its historical roller coaster by making it, in the very near future, an integral part of our new Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (or AEFs).

I can't overstate the significance of what our AEFs mean for modern aerospace operations. Originally designed to add predictability to the lives of our deploying personnel, we are doing that and much more. Our 10 AEFs are now in their second year of operation. Each AEF provides joint force commanders with ready and complete aerospace force packages that can be tailored to meet the full spectrum of

contingencies. At any given time, two of these AEFs can be deployed or remain on call, while the remaining force trains, exercises, and prepares.

Our Air Force goal is to make CSAR capability fully organic to each of our 10 AEFs by FY06. Two programs will make that plan a reality. The first involves the conversion of ten WC-130s to HC-130s, to increase our refueling force structure. We took delivery of the first converted aircraft in May of last year. The second element is our CSAR realignment plan--which involves the transfer of eight HH-60s and five HC-130s from the Reserve Component to active duty. The result of these changes will be an Air Force active duty and Reserve Component force structure that gives each AEF 24-hour CSAR capability. That means each AEF will have four HH-60s & six crews plus two HC-130s and four crews.

I want to emphasize, though, that Air Force improvements to CSAR go far beyond our AEF structure. For our CSAR professionals, we've created a new Combat Rescue Officer career field to improve advocacy for Personnel Recovery and the Pararescue & SERE career fields. We've also developed and expanded CSAR fighter escort and on-scene-commander training to increase the number of qualified SANDY pilots who can control a CSAR event, when required.

We're also upgrading our current systems. For the HH-60G, we're adding a digital data receiver, an electronic color moving map, blue force tracking, an altitude hover hold system, and improved IR countermeasures. For the HC-130, we're improving defensive systems, radar, and the SATCOM radio.

To safeguard our future capabilities, we're now conducting an Analysis of Alternatives for our next generation CSAR aircraft; and we're also developing new survivor radio and data transfer technologies.

Better capabilities don't just involve people and platforms, they also involve better ideas for conducting CSAR operations. In this area, we've completely rewritten CSAR doctrine and CSAR tactics manuals. Instead of CSAR operations being limited by the threat, we now let the threat environment drive the level of planning and support necessary to conduct CSAR ops. We're also developing new CSAR tactics--such as treating CSAR as a time-critical-target. We took some very promising first steps in this area at JEFX 2000. Finally, in recognition of the role information technology plays in our mission, we've developed a CONOPS for integrating space assets in Personnel Recovery.

There is also a significant organizational change on the horizon. In May of this year, we will stand up the 41st Rescue Wing at Moody AFB.

CSAR's future in the Air Force is bright. We look forward to improving the CSAR capacity of our AEFs, and we look forward to the capabilities we will bring to joint and combined operations. I'd like to conclude my formal remarks today by offering a few observations on the challenges and opportunities I see facing the CSAR community as a whole.

The first challenge involves training. ALLIED FORCE highlighted the need for joint and composite force exercises that focus on the planning factors, tactics, techniques, and procedures necessary to conduct CSAR operations. CSAR events are, by nature, time critical and complex. We must train with that reality in mind.

Second, because CSAR is an organic capability for multiple components, I also encourage the joint community to include sufficient CSAR and PR expertise on Theater CINC staffs. I see this as an important way to balance the needs of our components (to have organic CSAR capabilities) against the need of the joint force commander to have a variety of CSAR options in time critical situations.

Overall, I'm encouraged by CSAR's vector. The Air Force will continue to fully support Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) as the executive agent for personnel recovery. The still-new Joint Personnel Recovery Agency brings to JFCOM important expertise and insight into personnel recovery issues. And, the Joint Battle Lab for Personnel Recovery is an important avenue for testing and developing new equipment and technologies.

The CSAR community faces a promising future. After a difficult period of rebuilding, Air Force rescue personnel can look forward to this coming decade as one of lower OPSTEMPO and increased training and exercise opportunities. Meanwhile, our joint and combined partners can look forward to improved Air Force CSAR capability.

The CSAR mission will always be an especially challenging one. We don't get to choose the time and place of action, but we do determine our ability to react quickly and cohesively to CSAR events. As a joint and combined CSAR team, I am convinced we will succeed!