

MEMORANDUM FOR: Lt Col Gene Ramsay
Col Dan Nice
BG Ken Taylor
IN TURN

SUBJECT: Trip Report for the Pararescue Employment and ACC Rescue Conferences

FROM: 210RQS/CC

I attended both the AFSOC sponsored pararescue employment conference and the ACC sponsored Rescue Commanders conference held back to back over the past two weeks. I have combined the trip report since the major topic of discussion at both conferences dealt with pararescue issues. CMSgt McManus accompanied me at the AFSOC conference, Col Nice attended the Rescue Commanders conference at HQ ACC.

AFSOC PJ EMPLOYMENT CONFERENCE

1. The results of both of these conference were as separated in their final consensus as they could possibly be. It was obvious from the onset that both AFSOC and ACC came to the table with agendas. The AFSOC meeting was set up with an attempt to use TQM protocol with a facilitator and some basic ground rules. For some reason AFSOC selected the ACC representative, LtCol Jay Johnson as the Team Leader. LtCol Johnson wasted no time establishing the ACC position- the PJ pipeline is too long, there are too many core skills, and why do we train PJ's to the 7 level at a basic school. The AETC representative responded that the school has now been trimmed to 53 weeks and he feels that there is still room to shorten it up some more. All of the users agreed that they could live with a 1 year school if AETC could make it happen. LtCol Johnson then stated that the length of the school wasn't really the problem, the ARC was having a tough time sustaining the core skill training requirements. The ARC responded that they are having a problem right now for a number of reasons but it was short term. It took a whole day for LtCol Johnson to finally get to the real issue, ACC doesn't agree with the current role of the PJ in ACC's vision of the Combat Rescue Mission.

2. Let me depart here for just a minute and cover some of the hidden facts that came out during the conference that I feel are major contributors in making the PJ issue such a hot topic all of the sudden. First, ACC is having a major problem with PJ retention in both the first term airman and the second term airman categories. I can't quote the exact numbers but it works out to about 60 percent of their folks are leaving the career field. They circulated a PJ occupational survey that indicates ACC PJ's are leaving primarily because they feel that they are not being tasked to do the job they were hired to do. PJ manning is way down with over 100 vacancies thus, a real bell ringer to the Generals on SORTS reports. ACC's answer is to cut the core skills, reduce the up front training time and pump out PJ's. During this same 3 year period, AFSOC's retention rate is up in the 90 percentile even though their ops tempo is much higher, they are keeping their PJ's. ACC's retention problems directly affect AFSOC since ACC gets all the PJ babies and is supposed to feed AFSOC. The babies are leaving thus creating a manning problem for AFSOC. I also feel that there are some folks within ACC who have a real hard-on about PJ's for who knows what reasons, the PJ's are their own worse enemy and have offered many targets of opportunity. These folks are now in a position to influence who a PJ is and what he does and are making the push. My personal opinion is that they (ACC) is trying to get the snowball headed down the hill fast before the change of command this summer.

3. Anyway, back to the conference. It was pointed out to LtCol Johnson that current Air Force Doctrine clearly spells out the requirements for Combat Rescue and all of the current PJ core skills are derived from this doctrine. LtCol Johnson's response was that ACC would change the Air Force Doctrine!! If you think this is getting confusing, you should have been there. AFSOC's position throughout was an honest attempt to find a solution that would save the career field. ACC's radical departure from the core skills would in

all likelihood result in a split since there would be such a difference in the two animals, crossflow between the two commands would no longer work. LtCol Johnson backed off a bit when he realized the ramifications of ACC's proposal and the group as a whole came up with a number of assumptions that were measured against several proposed solutions. In the end, **only two solutions solved the agreed upon problem and satisfied all of the assumptions.**

- A. **AFSOC would take over the entire career field.** Vacant PJ billets would be converted to man a left gunner/scanner or an additional flight engineer per PAA aircraft. Once the units were up speed the PJ's would move to one of the Special Tactics units. AFSOC would provide PJ's to rescue tasking at major exercises and contingencies. Peacetime SAR would be handled by Squadron Medical Elements (SME), normally 1 flight surgeon and 2 medical technicians.
- B. **ACC keep the PJ's but they come off of aircrew status.** Again, fill the left scanner/gunner requirement with a gunner or flight engineer manned the same as the first solution.

Both of these solutions keep the PJ career field in tact, both keep the core skills in the pipeline, both help the sorts problems because although the total number of PJ's will not increase, the number required decreases. AFSOC sees no major change in how the ARC units look or operate since our PJ's will stay in place and will continue to be utilized as the unit commander dictates. Lots of things will need to be worked out in the command and control, wire diagrams, LOA's/MOU's, and how we get the manning increase for the engineer/ gunner. I will add at this point, the consensus was strongly in favor of an additional flight engineer over a one dimensional gunner.

4. **LtCol Johnson threw up his hands at this point and agreed with the two proposals going forward but I could tell that neither he nor his boss would support these recommendations.** He was sent to the conference with an ACC position and after two days, that position was unchanged. The plan was for him to brief his boss back at ACC and Col Newman to brief his boss at AFSOC and then let Gen Hobson and Gen Downer duke it out. End of Conference One.

HQ ACC COMMANDERS CONFERENCE

1. This started out as a typical command sponsored conference with all the normal briefings from the various staff agencies, personnel, budget, logistics etc, etc. It got real interesting right after the lunch break on the first day. **LtCol Johnson stood up to brief the results of the AFSOC PJ employment conference. It took him almost 45 seconds to brief the two proposed solutions that came out of that conference. He then devoted the next 45 minutes briefing the ACC position. No halo, no scuba, no PJ ground ops, 6 week indoctrination, and EMT B (then briefed that ACC would roll over and accept EMT I) He also recommended limiting RAMZ to those units tasked with Space Shuttle support.** There was almost no discussion and Col select Hodges wanted to put the ACC proposal up for a consensus vote. That's when I raised my hand and got my two cents worth in. **It was obvious that the ACC Rescue unit commanders were not going to stick their career neck out and take issue with their headquarters proposal.** Needless to say, my comments got the ball rolling and the discussions lasted until late in the afternoon with no vote.

2. The second day got started with Lt Col Johnson summarizing all the input from the previous afternoon. The new proposal now included some type of scuba familiarization in conjunction with the rescue swimmers course, it included some type of SERE training to satisfy the ground ops requirement and it keep RAMZ as a rescue mission both peacetime and combat. This proposal will not meet the one school one career field requirement and I am confident that the AFSOC folks will roll their PJ's into the Combat Controllers AFSC. A new course will have to be developed for the "Rescue" PJ's and a waiver granted for maintaining a career field with less than 250 personnel.

3. **ACC must still go out and change AF Doctrine- tell the customer what he wants.** There are also some concerns about what we do with the PJ's we have on board now. There will be a significant pay reduction

for the PJ's if we eliminate scuba and halo. This shouldn't be a big issue, but it will impact retention and that's why I bring it up. I also think that eliminating these skills will have a negative impact on recruiting. If we lower the standard, the quality of the people we get will be suspect, as will the quality of the service Combat Rescue units deliver. ACC does not want a PJ, the animal they want to build falls more in line with the Aeromed AFSC with some guns and goggles thrown in for good measure. Maj Baumgardner at the Air Staff has already questioned this and feels that the Air Staff would lean towards calling this "person" something other than a PJ.

4. Now here's Larry's personal view of all this. If the ACC proposal goes through as it stands now, Rescue as a whole is in big trouble. Doing the difficult missions, higher risk stuff, is our bread and butter, both in combat and in peacetime. Take Alaska for example, there are many agencies out there that can do "Rescue". We are the only ones who do the tough missions, the ones nobody else will take. Take away our special core skills and our special training and we are no more capable than the Army MAST folks, or the State Troopers, or the Air Ambulance folks. Let's face it, we are a very expensive force to maintain and it wouldn't take a bean counter long to figure out who needs to be cut. There are many things the PJ's do that require a serious look, but we don't need to gut the career field when all that is needed is a manicure. Any significant reduction in the PJ's capability is a significant reduction to Combat Rescue's capability.

5. I am not sure why this issue has taken on a life of its own, but I'm afraid that if cooler heads don't prevail, we are all headed down a path that could spell the end of Combat Rescue. I think we have two options left at this point, one, we get in touch with Gen Ralston to see if he can halt the momentum until he has his hands on the reins and can take a close look at all the issues. Two, we split from the other ARC rescue units and push whatever buttons are necessary to get us into Special Ops. We haven't had that much luck getting PACAF to task us in a war plan and we certainly aren't the favorite children at NGB. We have done much for the AFSOC folks in the desert and I think we could find support if we ask for it. It's a gamble but unless the ACC initiative gets stopped we could be in real trouble.

6. The only other issue of major concern that came out of the conference had to do with the Kirtland school. They can't produce enough pilots to meet requirements and have proposed a new concept. They will produce copilots only, reducing the course length to something less than 60 training days. These copilots will be trained to the 2C level only with follow-on training at the gaining units. This will increase the outflow of students and open up some badly needed Aircraft Commander and Instructor upgrade quotas at the formal school. Most of us agreed to the concept but wanted to see some hard copy on what exactly they will produce. Kirtland agreed to flow this information out and then get it to the commands for coordination. More to follow.



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