



Master Sgt. Thomas Houghton (left), an HH-60G Pave Hawk crew chief, and Master Sgt. Keith Liming, an HH-60G flight engineer, discuss last-minute details before a mission at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. Both airmen are members of the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Squadron, and currently deployed to Turkey supporting Operation Northern Watch with combat search and rescue capabilities. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Cecil Daw) | [High-Res Version of this photo](#)

Guard unit stands ready to rescue downed pilots

*by Tech. Sgt. Bob Blauser
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04/19/02 - **INCIRLIK AIR BASE, Turkey (AFP)** -- One unit at Operation Northern Watch trains for events it hopes never happen -- rescues.

If a coalition aircraft gets in trouble while patrolling the skies over northern Iraq, the 106th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron, from the New York Air National Guard, stands ready to come to the rescue.

"If a pilot gets shot down behind enemy lines, it's our job to go in, extract the pilot, and bring him back to safety." said Lt. Col. Graham Buschor, the

squadron's commander.

The squadron performs the rescue mission using three HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters, two HC-130s, and about 100 people.

ONW provides an ideal environment for the 106th ERQS to operate, said Buschor.

Many of the missions the squadron flies while at home contribute to the missions they carry out while deployed, said Buschor.

"The best part about our mission is that what we train for in our wartime mission, we readily use in peacetime," he said.

Typical peacetime missions back home could include anything from an open-ocean rescue to rescuing a stranded mountain climber. They handle five to 10 open-ocean rescues a year, Buschor said.

"For open-ocean type rescues, our tasking normally comes from the Coast Guard," he said. "Anything beyond their range or ability they'll task us with."

The 106th ERQS claims the longest over-water helicopter mission ever, a 15-hour flight to rescue Ukrainian seamen from the ill-fated freighter Salvadore Allende in 1994. Other prominent missions include search and rescue efforts for TWA Flight 800, John F. Kennedy Jr., and the sailboat Satori. It was a 106th ERQS crew that was depicted in the movie "The Perfect Storm" trying to rescue the Satori.

They were also involved with the World Trade Center rescue effort.

Crew members train for combat search and rescue missions throughout the year, said Chief Master Sgt. Tim Malloy, 106th ERQS noncommissioned officer in charge of pararescuemen, or PJs. To stay sharp here, they conduct a combat search and rescue exercise monthly.

"The CSAR exercises get all the players involved," said Staff Sgt. Brian Mosher, one of eight PJs deployed here with the 106th ERQS. "It's a great exercise because it gives you the whole picture and it keeps things fresh in our minds."

The unit has recently been partially mobilized for a year to support missions like ONW, said Malloy.

"It's tough mainly on your family members, and it's tough on your employers," Buschor said. "You've got to go to your civilian employer and tell them you need time off, which isn't always the easiest thing to do, especially for six months."

This is the 106th's sixth visit to ONW. Their last deployment here was in 2000, according to Buschor. "We've been pretty busy with these (aerospace expeditionary force deployments)."

Despite their high operations tempo, Mosher said every mission or training opportunity helps to keep the unit working as a team.

"We all never want it to happen, of course, but we're prepared mentally and physically to go in and get that pilot," he said. (Courtesy of U.S. Air Forces in Europe News Service)