

Rescue

3rd Air Rescue Group

The 3rd Rescue (later, Air Rescue) Squadron, following the North Korean invasion, deployed detachments to Korea to perform search and rescue. Initially the squadron's primary mission involved intercepting and escorting distressed aircraft over the land areas of Japan and its adjacent seas. Combat operations and a changing tactical situation expanded the mission to include the rescue of stranded personnel behind enemy lines and aeromedical helicopter evacuation. The 3rd ARS was regularly augmented with personnel from the 2nd ARS (later redesignated 2nd Air Rescue Group) based in the Philippines. The aircraft available at the start of the Korean War forced the 3rd ARS to confine air rescue flights to short range rescue. These included the L-5, a highly maneuverable liaison aircraft used in helicopter escort, supply drops, and medical evacuation from small airfields; Sikorsky H-5 helicopters capable of operating in mountainous and rice paddy terrain; the obsolescent SB-17, a search and rescue version of the Flying Fortress bomber; and the SC-47 transport, which aided in searches and hauled critically needed supplies to outlying units. The squadron soon added, while phasing out the SB-17, the SB-29 and the amphibious SA-16. During the UN assault on Pyongyang in October 1950, it evacuated forty-seven injured paratroopers from drop zones at Suncheon and Sukchon. In March 1951, the squadron tested the new model H-19 helicopter, which proved invaluable in multiple evacuations and greatly extended the operational range for rotary-wing rescues. A significant innovation in the use of the helicopter was medical evacuation. For critically wounded soldiers at front-line aid stations, helicopter medical evacuations reduced a possibly fatal ten- to fourteen-hour road trip to a one-hour flight to a rear Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) unit. In December 1951, H-5s participated in a highly successful experiment by flying wounded soldiers directly from front-line aid stations to a hospital ship off the Korean coast. In November 1952, the 3rd elevated to group level, and squadrons replaced the detachments. From June 1950 to the end of hostilities in July 1953, it rescued almost 10,000 UN personnel, almost 1,000 from behind enemy lines, and over 200 from the water. For numerous commendable and heroic rescues, the 3rd ARS/ARG earned three Distinguished Unit Citations.

Combat Components

Flight A (Johnson AB, Japan): -November 14, 1952.

Flight B (Yokota/Misawa/Yokota/Komaki, Japan): -November 14, 1952.

Flight C (Misawa AB, Japan): -November 14, 1952.

Flight D (Ashiya AB, Japan): -November 14, 1952.

Det F/Det 1 (Seoul/Taegu/Yongdong-po/Seoul, South Korea): c. September 24, 1950-March 1, 1953.

36th Air Rescue Squadron: November 14, 1952-.

37th Air Rescue Squadron: November 14, 1952-.

38th Air Rescue Squadron: November 14, 1952-.

39th Air Rescue Squadron: November 14, 1952-.

2157th Air Rescue Squadron: March 1, 1953-.

Stations

Johnson AB, Japan, duration.

Commanders

Lt. Col. David J. Nolan, -July 25, 1950; Maj. Harvey E. Beedy, July 25, 1950; Maj. Theodore P. Tatum, August 16, 1950; Col. Klair E. Back, August 28, 1950; Lt. Col. Robert B. Keck, June 3, 1953; Col. Tracy J. Peterson, July 15, 1953-.

Commendations

Campaign Streamers

UN Defensive; UN Offensive; CCF Intervention; First UN Counteroffensive; CCF Spring Offensive; UN Summer-Fall Offensive; Second Korean Winter; Korea, Summer-Fall 1952; Third Korean Winter; Korea, Summer 1953.

Decorations

Three Distinguished Unit Citations for actions June 25-December 25, 1950; April 22-July 8, 1951; and May 1-July 27, 1953.

Two Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citations for the periods June 25, 1950-June 30, 1951 and July 1, 1951-March 31, 1953.