



Rescue flight crews provide help from above

by Tech. Sgt. Mike Hammond
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6/22/2007 - **FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE, Wash. (AFPN)** -- On a moonless night, the glow from a red and green instrument panel illuminates the faces of the crew of Blade 79er, a UH-1N Huey flying a night-vector mission over the tree-covered mountains of northern Washington. Suddenly, the radio crackles.

"Rescue, Rescue, Rescue ... Phaser 1-2 calling in vector," the voice of a student on the ground nearby announces.

After authenticating the student's identity and asking about enemy activity nearby, Capt. Amanda Hall, piloting the UH-1N communicates back and forth with the student and directs the chopper accordingly until getting a good visual through her night-vision goggles.

It was a drill the crew of Blade 79er would repeat more than 70 times within five hours during two missions in June to support the Air Force's combat survival school, which trains aircrew members to survive until rescued if their aircraft goes down.

Based at Fairchild Air Force Base, Captain Hall and her crew -- Capt. Seung Hak Lee, the co-pilot; Master Sgt. Keith Fitzgerald, the flight engineer; and Tech. Sgt. John Parish, the flight medic; work for the 36th Rescue Flight.

The flight's mission is to support the survival school and also survival, evasion, resistance and escape specialist training where members train to become SERE instructors, Sergeant Fitzgerald said.

This support comes in several forms besides the night vectoring Blade 79er accomplished, said Senior Airman Jacob Bragg, a flight engineer with the 36th RQF.

"We help them demonstrate parachute techniques for students and distinguished visitors," Airman Bragg said. "We also practice search and rescue scenarios. This involves a parachutist jumping out, landing in



Staff Sgt. George Gonzalez practices water hoist procedures from a UH-1N Huey at Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash. Sergeant Gonzalez is an independent duty medical technician assigned to the 36th Rescue Flight as a flight medic in support of survival, evasion, resistance and escape specialist training and the Air Force combat survival school. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Jacob Bragg)

simulated hostile territory, radioing the helicopter, and then we go get them. We either lower a hoist to the individual and bring them up or simulate a pararescue team extraction by using SERE instructors."

The scenarios are accomplished to demonstrate capabilities to survival school students, who later get a chance to practice being hoisted up from a nearby pad, Airman Bragg said.

A secondary mission for 36th RQF Airmen is to support the National Search and Rescue Plan through the Air Force Rescue and Coordination Center based at Langley Air Force Base, Va.

"If local emergency responders need help rescuing someone, they call the (AFRCC)," Sergeant Fitzgerald said. "If the support is approved, the center calls us and we go help."

The unit just recently began flying night vectors, Captain Hall said. "It provides a more realistic scenario and adds a different challenge for the students."

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