



Training mission results in real-life rescue

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7/2/2007 - **PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.** -- A series of coincidences and an alert helicopter crew from Air Force Reserve Command's 920th Rescue Wing here saved the life of a 66-year-old Florida man.

Several miles off of the coast of Florida's Daytona Beach, Lt. Col. Paul Nevius and his crew were piloting an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter back to Patrick AFB when they spotted a 21-foot boat moving up the Atlantic Ocean at full-throttle with no one aboard.

"It was not our intent to be anywhere close to that position," said Colonel Nevius.

Bad weather on their original course to Key West, Fla. sent the reservists north to Gainesville, Fla., and the flight path to Patrick was hampered by air traffic.

In addition to launching its own search for the missing boater, the crew amassed a large-scale search among the Air Force Reserve, local Coast Guard units and the Daytona Sheriff's department.

Two more Air Force Reserve helicopter crews, preparing for nighttime training missions, went to help but not before wing maintenance people had reconfigured the aircraft for the real life-saving mission. Five pararescuemen, also preparing for a training mission, joined the search.

"If there was someone out there, he needed to be found," said Master Sgt. Chris Seinkner, a 920th RQW pararescueman.

With only a few hours of daylight left and using the previous helicopter crew's search pattern, the two helicopters on the scene flew to the course line and began working towards each other.

"You could only see the shore in between the 5-foot waves," said Sergeant Seinkner.

The crew suddenly spotted Russell Alger and made a beeline towards him.

"We saw the guy and 30 seconds later we were in the water," said Sergeant Seinkner.

Sergeant Seinkner and another pararescueman, Staff Sgt. Kacee Holms, jumped out of the helicopter, plunged into the choppy ocean water and swam towards Mr. Alger.

"He was waving his arms and splashing in the water," said Sergeant Holms. "He was excited to see us."

"I took off my life preserver and put it around the guy," said Sergeant Seinkner.

Combat search-and-rescue flight engineer, Senior Master Sgt. Stephen Schwarz, lowered the hoist to the pararescuemen.

Sergeant Holms then put Mr. Alger in the hoist and gave the thumbs up signal to Sergeant Schwarz, who



Staff Sgt. Kacee Holmes (left) and Master Sgt. Chris Seinkner, Air Force Reserve pararescuemen with the 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick Air Force Base, Fla., were preparing for a training mission when they got called out on a real life-saving mission that resulted in rescuing a 66-year-old man from the Atlantic Ocean June 28, 2007. (U.S. Air Force photo)

pulled them up to safety.

The two pararescuemen readied their lifesaving skills while the crew transported Mr. Alger to Daytona International Airport, where the man denied medical treatment. He was in good condition upon his release.

"Because of the effort of a lot of our own professionals, a very lucky 66-year old Floridian is alive today," said 920th Rescue Wing Commander Col. Steve Kirkpatrick.

"I truly appreciate the efforts of all involved. You have all embodied the motto 'these things we do that others may live' and made the entire community proud," said the colonel. (Air Force Reserve Command News Service)