



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 352ND SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP (AFSOC)
APO AE 09459**

27 May 02

MEMORANDUM FOR 21 SOS/CC

FROM: 21 SOS/DO

SUBJECT: MISSION COMMANDER AAR FOR 21-22 MAY 02 RESCUE MISSION

1. 21 SOS received a call from UK Rescue Coordination Center at Kinloss, Scotland at approximately 1830z 21 May 2002, to see if it was feasible to rescue 2 injured boaters from a 65' yacht about 700 miles SW of RAF Mildenhall, 450 miles from the nearest point in the UK, and 350 miles from the nearest point of land in Spain. Weather report at that time was 65 knot winds and 25 foot seas. 21 SOS had 3 night training lines with rotors turning and two tankers planning to A/R that night. We put the training lines on hold, did some hasty planning, and told RCC we would accept the mission. We turned our 3 night tac lines into 2 augmented crews. 21 SOS crews consisted of the following: Flt lead: pilots- Sean LeRoy, Aaron Barnes, Dan Nielsen; FEs-Mark Mapel, Ron Durr, Jim Hessick; AGs-Brad Parker, Kevin McKinney, Doug Vachon. Chalk 2: pilots- Kevin "Chooch" Churchill, Manny Fiterre, Roy Oberhaus; FEs- Chuck Gutshall, John Hickman, Kevin Canders; AGs- Tony Gentile, Dub Scott, Jason House.

2. The helicopters launched at approximately 2135z. The enroute portion was relatively uneventful. Air refueling was challenging due to strong winds and moderate turbulence. Flight lead was air refueling without a yaw/alt servo in the AFCS. Weather enroute was fair: 1000'-1500' broken with intermittent rain, some heavy, relatively good visibility, and a good moon, but not much showing through the cloud cover. After three air refuelings the aircraft arrived at the distressed vessel at approximately 0430z, which was right about BMNT. Weather was improving with winds 40 knots and 15-25 foot seas. Sky conditions at the objective were 1500 scattered-broken, with good visibility. An RAF "Nimrod" reconnaissance plane was on station giving position updates of the vessel, so there was no search involved.

3. Flight lead hoisted two STS personnel to the deck of the yacht. At that time he was experiencing a bad main rotor damper and had only 1 operable AFCS amp and no Yaw/alt servo, so he decided to let chalk 2 do the recovery. The STS personnel reported that the swells were at least 25 feet. One of the combat controllers hit his head on the yacht while performing duties on one of the survivors and may have sustained a mild concussion. Chalk 2 hoisted down the stokes litter, and refueled with the tanker while the STS personnel prepared for exfil. The yacht was so far out that the helos had to keep the fuel up or they could not make it back to land. This situation was helped by the 40 knot winds that would be pushing them home. Chalk 2 recovered the 2xsurvivors via stokes litter, and then the STS personnel jumped in the water and rode up the penetrator.

4. Chronology of mission events:

21/1830z: 21 SOS Operations Desk, TSgt Jacob, received a telephone call from Warrant Officer Pratt at Kinloss Rescue Coordination Center (RCC). TSgt Jacob called me on my mobile phone. I told TSgt Jacob that I would be into the squadron in approximately 10 minutes. I instructed him to put the night training lines on hold and recall a pilot from each aircraft.

21/1845z: Called WO Pratt at RCC. He informed me of the situation. There was a 65' yacht that had been de-masted in high seas. There were two individuals on the yacht with broken ribs and possible internal injuries. There was an RAF Nimrod reconnaissance plane overhead. The yacht had a hold in it and was taking on water, but the pumps were keeping up and they were not worried about sinking. Current position of the yacht was N46 51 W 015 12. Current weather was reported as 65 knot winds and 8 meter swells with 10 km visibility.

Capt Nielsen plotted coordinates of distressed vessel in PFPS, 700 NM SW of EGUN. Estimate 7-8 hours flight time with wind.

Informed SOCCE of possible mission. Instructed them to call Shadow aircraft and inform them of possible mission.

Ops desk tried to call STS—no answer at squadron.

21/1900z: Lt Col Lambert called from 67 SOS. Will have his crews shutdown and send planners to 21 SOS. 21 SOS pilots depart for SOG/WX for update briefing.

21/1905z: Instructed TSgt Jacob to have the night lines shut down. One of our crew members was aware that STS had a softball game, so we sent a runner to the softball field.

21/1910z: Call Lt Col Poucher, acting SOG/CC, to inform him of situation. Lt Col Poucher asked me if we had received official tasking. I said that the mission was only in the feasibility stage.

21/1915z: MSgt Hoye from STS arrives 21 SOS. I informed him of the situation and he departed to get teams ready. I estimated earliest takeoff at 2045z. Col Dreyer, 3AF/A3, calls to inform me that he is aware of the mission and offers his assistance.

21/1920z: Called WO Pratt at RCC for update. NSTR. I asked him if this was an official request from RCC. He said that it was really dependent on whether or not we thought we could do the mission. If we were capable, then he would make an official request.

21/1930z: RCC calls to make formal request for assistance. I told WO Pratt that we were still looking at the mission. I would let him know when we decide. WO Pratt assigns "Rescue" (56-59) call-signs to our aircraft for the mission. Lt Col Poucher advised of formal request.

21/1955z: 67 SOS crews and Col Dreyer arrive 21 SOS. I gave mission overview briefing and assumed duties as overall AMC. Col Dreyer began to coordinate for KC-135 support for 67 SOS. Helo and C-130 crews briefed/coordinated HAR.

21/2010z: Lt Col Poucher calls to inform me that SOCEUR has given approval to execute mission. I informed Lt Col Poucher that I was assuming role of AMC and he approved.

21/2015z: Called RCC to inform them we would accept the mission.

21/2100z: Crews step to aircraft.

21/2130z: Rescue 56/57 (Pave Low) takeoff EGUN

21/2200z: Rescue 51 (Nimrod) departing SAR area. Yacht, c/s Persuader, is currently located at N4654 W01436, and is moving at 10kts heading 105 degrees.

21/2241z: Rescue 58 (Shadow) takeoff EGUN

21/2244z: Rescue 59 (Shadow) takeoff EGUN

21/2350z: R59 refuels R56/57. R56 passes ETA of 0345z to objective area based on current winds.

22/0010z: R59 navigator plots expected position of Persuader at 0350z, N46 47 W01258. Coordinates passed to R56/57 with proposed new ARCP for HAR #2.

22/0030z: Blackhat passes 1 hr slip in ARCT for KC-135.

22/0115z: R52 (Nimrod) takeoff.

22/0120z: RCC requests location of primary recovery site. R56 passes that current winds make return to RAF St Mawgan, UK, the best option.

22/0145z: R59 refuels from Quid 98 (KC-135)

22/0237z: R59 refuels R56/57. Drogue on left hose becomes inoperable.

22/0314z: R52 overhead Persuader. Current location N4700 W01347. Winds West @ 42 kts, seas 8 meters, visibility 10 km, ceiling 1500 feet.

22/0355z: R58 attempts NVG reconnaissance of Persuader. NSTR.

22/0418z: R58 refuels R56/57 10 miles from Persuader.

22/0430z: R56/57 arrive objective area (N4700.00 W01347.50)

22/0437z: R56 reports he has 1 hr loiter fuel prior to bingo.

22/0450z: R56 hoists 2xSTS to deck of Persuader.

22/0509z: R57 reports R56 has AFCS problems. R57 now primary for recovery.

22/0516z: R56 informs AMC that he is enroute to St Mawgan with AFCS and main rotor damper problems, ETA 0830z.

22/0553z: R58 refuels R57 in objective area.

22/0650z: R57 reports pickup of 2x survivors and 2xSTS from Pursuader complete.

22/0730z: R59 refuels R57 enroute RAF St Mawgan.

22/0740z: R57 reports survivor status: Male 24 yrs, lower right side pain, suspected fractured ribs, pulse 80, respirations 16, BP 112/pal. Female 27 yrs, suspected head trauma, lost consciousness, suspected broken breast bone, pulse 90, respirations 16, BP 108/pal. Combat Controller w/ possible concussion due to head injury while performing duties in high seas. ETA St Mawgan 0913z.

22/0755z: R56 lands at St Mawgan (EGDG)

22/0900z: R59 lands EGDG

22/0915z: R57 lands EGDG with injured personnel.

22/0950z: R59 departs EGDG with all helo personnel (except 2 x crew chiefs) for EGUN

22//1045z: R59 Lands EGUN.

5. Items for Discussion:

- a. **SAR Checklist.**
 - i. **Observation:** 21 SOS does not have a SAR checklist.
 - ii. **Recommendation:** Develop SAR checklist.POC:
 - iii. **POC:** 21 SOS/ADO.

- b. **Flight Surgeon Participation.**
 - i. **Observation:** TSgt Hessick recommended that we call the flight surgeon/SOG medics for participation. I was not sure we had room for them on the helicopters with augmented crews. I failed to revisit the issue until it was too late to get the flight surgeons to the aircraft prior to launch.
 - ii. **Recommendation:** Ensure Flight Medicine notification is included in new SAR checklist.
 - iii. **POC:** 21 SOS/ADO.

6. Mission Summary: 51 SOG personnel operating, supporting, and performing duties from 4 SOG aircraft flew 46.8 hours while rescuing two British civilian personnel approximately 700 NM southwest of RAF Mildenhall, and almost 450 NM from mainland United Kingdom. The entire mission was executed in a very professional manner, from hasty mission planning to air refueling and conducting helicopter hoist work in very demanding conditions. Kinloss Rescue Coordination Center confirmed that this was the longest distance air-sea rescue launched from the British Isles.

GREGORY J. LENGYEL, Lt Col, USAF
Air Mission Commander