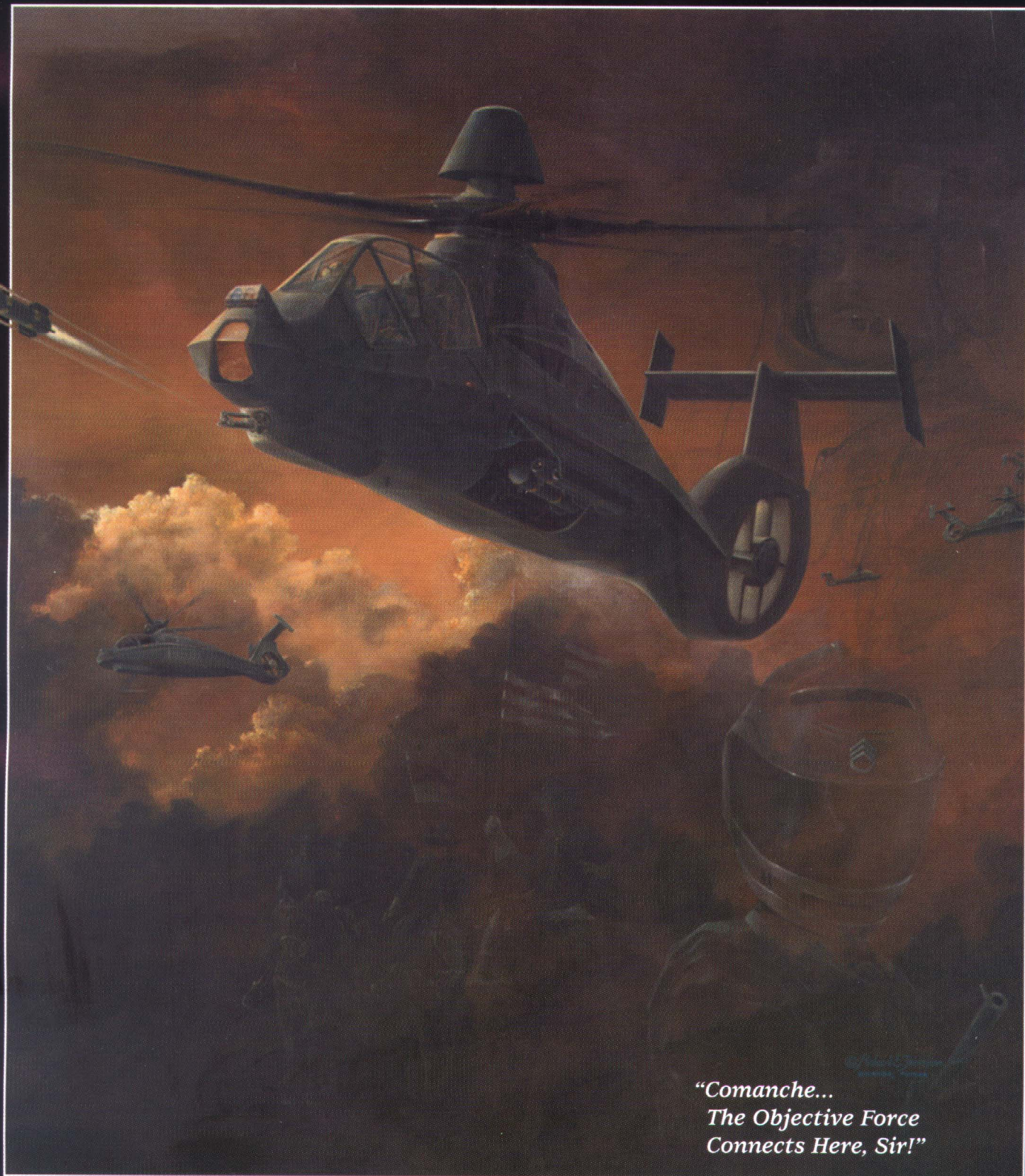


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*"Comanche...  
The Objective Force  
Connects Here, Sir!"*

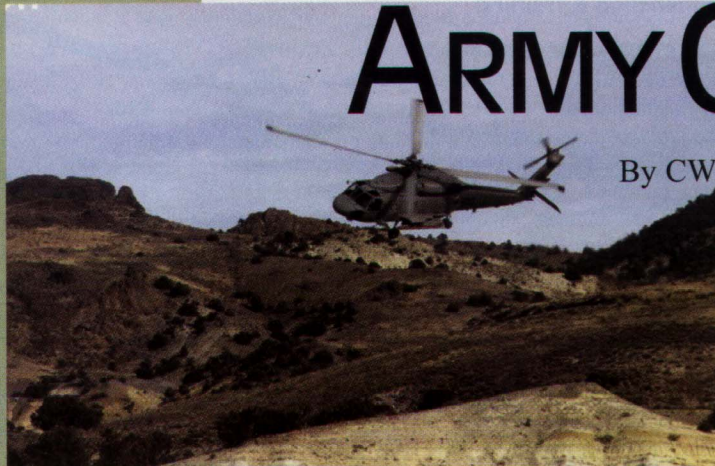


**BOEING SIKORSKY**  
RAH-66 COMANCHE TEAM



# REFORMING ARMY CSAR

*The following is another article in our continuing series on the need for, and requirements of, an Army combat search and rescue capability.*



By CW3 William R. Clemons

Combat search and rescue (CSAR) does not exist in the Army as it does in the other services. Indeed, there has never been a Department of the Army-level CSAR program, and the survival and evasion training for Army aviators is the least extensive of all the services.

Joint Publication 3-50.2 states that each service and the U.S. Special Operations Command are responsible for performing CSAR in support of their own operations. To meet this requirement the Army needs its own CSAR infrastructure — structure and training must be reformed to improve survivability and preclude a choice of leaving a crew behind or using combat assets to the detriment of the mission. What follows is a list of improvements that I believe will make CSAR recovery a viable mission. The capstone to these improvements should be the Army's first Rescue Company.

## The Need

A common misperception is that Army special operations aviation (SOA) will come to the rescue when aircrews



are shot down. However, special operations units do not normally provide CSAR coverage for regular Army units because they are tasked with special forces (SF) missions and are considered high-demand/low-density assets. FM 1-108, "Special Operations Aviation Regiment," points out

that SOA "...is not organized, equipped, or trained to conduct continuing SAR and CSAR tasks...." The Army does not have any aircraft or units properly equipped or trained to recover personnel shot down behind enemy lines.

While many squadrons and battalions conduct CSAR training missions, such missions are usually at the "crawl" level of complexity and are usually well rehearsed. Whenever an aircraft is unexpectedly shot down and extraction is planned for, the pick-up responsibility always falls on the Air Force. The problem, of course, is that Air Force CSAR assets are also a high demand/low density asset, and may not be available during a full-scale conflict. The Air Force has its own pilots to retrieve, especially during the beginning of a war, and can assist Army pilots only when time and assets are available.

## The Problem

There are two primary differences in the way that the Army and Air Force approach CSAR. The first is that the Air Force normally operates aircraft in pairs, and each pilot fills out an Evasion Plan of Action (EPA). Army aircraft, on the other hand, normally operate in groups of four to eight. One EPA for the troop or company would allow for a more standardized plan and less confusion.

The second difference is that the Air Force has its pilots complete EPAs with unique evasion plans that take them to a few, large Selected Areas For Evasion (SAFE). This works well for the Air Force because of how it operates. For Army aviation, EPAs should be planned at the troop level, with several small SAFE areas preplanned by the brigade based on information from the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). Unfortunately, the expertise needed for this type of specialized planning is missing because of the lack of schooling for the individuals doing the planning.

Most squadrons and battalions train a Downed Aircraft Recovery Team (DART) for recovering aircraft and pilots. Often, the units are planning to perform recoveries across the forward line of own troops (FLOT). There are several problems with this when one digs into the details.

The first difficulty is that the lift aircraft used by the DART tends to be whatever aircraft happens to be available



at the moment — and it usually does not have a hoist. This means that the aircraft must land to recover the downed aircrew members, who could be injured and in a wooded area with no nearby landing zones. The personnel on board the recovery aircraft receive no special training outside their unit, and the DART mission is primarily focused on fixing the aircraft, not recovering a crew from hostile territory.

DART teams are meant to recover aircraft on the friendly side of the FLOT and it should remain that way. The truth is that to send attack aircraft behind enemy lines takes almost three days of planning and coordination. To send a lone aircraft, with no support, cross-FLOT is to throw away that aircraft and crew and thus complicate things by having a second crew on the ground, evading capture.

Most AH-64 units plan on having downed aircrews self-extract by clipping on to their wingman's step for a lift to safety — the 6th Cavalry's tactical SOP is a prime example of this tactic [see *"Spur Ride: Buddy Extraction on the AH-64 Apache" in the October 2001 issue.*]. However, the problem with self-extraction is that whatever system shot down the first aircraft will still be close by. This means that immediate self-extraction is less likely and the aviators will have to evade to a pick-up point. In addition, in many situations the orbiting wingman will have to leave because of low fuel or to complete the mission.

## The Solution

To prepare Army aviators for the ordeal of escape and evasion, and to put into place a system that can locate them to perform a rapid and efficient pick-up, changes must be made to how Army aviation does its CSAR business.

Because the Army has no CSAR identity, individuals responsible for developing "something" must start from scratch. First, they gather information from other Army units that have developed some kind of program or had exercises. Then they start asking other services how they do business, then write an SOP or start a program. To make things work, these programs usually require personnel to work outside of their regular jobs to fill new positions, or gives them an additional duty that really requires full-time commitment.

Common problems encountered usually start with inadequate resources — money, people, time and space. Units get a slot or two for Level C SERE school with either the Army or Navy, and the pilots who take the course become the SERE officers responsible for training their units. They start to get things in order — when they are not working in their primary occupation — then they leave.

One solution is to open a Level C SERE school, identical to the one at Fort Bragg and staffed by SF personnel, at Fort Rucker for all graduates of the AH-64 and OH-58D qualification courses. The school should be open to others — such as UH-60 pilots flying cross-FLOT missions — on a case-by-case basis. A refresher and cold weather survival course, similar to the Navy's programs, should also be developed and taught to Army aviators. SERE Level C needs to

become a prerequisite for attack or cavalry command.

Reform must begin at the lowest levels. At a minimum, troop commanders and TACOPS officers should be SERE Level C graduates. Troop aviators should receive one week of SF-taught field SERE training once every six months. This could be taught to the whole troop or, preferably, the SF can run a SERE Level B course in each theater. It should also fall on the TACOPS officer to ensure that all mission briefs include Special Instructions (SPINS) information from the Air Tasking Order (ATO) geared for Army operations. When planning for CSAR it is usually an accomplishment to get the SPINS down to the unit. The digital connectivity just is not there in most places.

At the next level, the squadron or battalion S-3 and TACOPS officers should also, at a minimum, be SERE Level C graduates. All exercises should include a CSAR exercise as a matter of course, and once every quarter should be mandated. Squadrons can ensure that each troop receives SERE field training twice a year, or that the pilots attend a SERE Level B/refresher course. The squadron

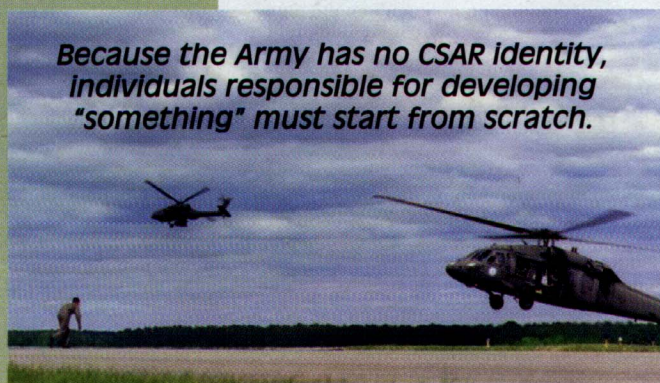
TACOPS officer is currently responsible for ensuring the SPINS information is disseminated, but should also be given the time to have it tailored for the Army mission. Finally, to put teeth into the program, an actual CSAR operation should be evaluated during a unit's annual exercise evaluation.

As professional and impressive as some CSAR programs are, they still lack

the most critical of equipment. The most critical equipment needed includes a hoist, a Personnel Locator System, satellite communications (SATCOM), and a forward looking infra-red sensor to find warm bodies and allow operations on low-illumination nights. Other useful equipment includes weather radar and a fuel probe.

The article "The Case for Army CSAR" by CPT Mazel and CW2 O'Sullivan [see the October 2001 issue] highlighted the need for, and specifications of, this special equipment. As that article pointed out, the MH-60 is the ideal platform to begin with. But it is not worth the investment without aviators that can use it to its fullest potential. The pilots can be trained at the Air Force Advanced Fighter Weapons School at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. Their premium training can sustain the Army until Fort Rucker develops its own training, which hopefully will surpass even the Air Force's high standards.

While the other services have specially trained personnel riding in the back of CSAR aircraft, the Army normally uses mechanics with combat lifesaver bags. There is no reason for this when the Army has the world's best-trained and best-equipped people for the job. Army SF soldiers are more prepared than anyone else for any contingency that could occur on a recovery. Unfortunately, they only do recovery when it does not interfere with their regular mission. Every theater should have one or two A-teams dedicated to, and training with, CSAR assets and pilots. Teaching SERE Level B or SERE refresher courses would





fit well with their skills and talents, and would be a bonus for the students.

## The Need for an RCC

Most theaters are developing CSAR programs and Rescue Coordination Centers (RCC), but are held back because these are ad hoc units with personnel and aircraft taken "out of hide." An RCC, manned by trained personnel and supported by the appropriate type of unit, is vital if the Army is to join the joint rescue community as an equal.

Yet several theaters do not have a dedicated RCC. Some units have their Deep Operations Coordination Cells (DOCCs) pull double duty. An RCC can be progressively developed to provide interim capability, but only if the positions are slots that DA will fill and the personnel are trained for the job. The list of problems with these RCCs and Army aviation is long, but the difficulties are not insurmountable.

An RCC can be built in three stages, the first one being an RCC Liaison (RCCL). The RCCL can be composed of a Battlefield Coordination Detachment (BCD) TACOPS officer, a senior NCO and a junior NCO. The TACOPS officer should be a SERE Level C graduate, and all RCCL members must be graduates of Personnel Recovery (PR) 101, 301 and the Joint Rescue Coordinator Course. For simplicity and to leverage experience, the RCCL can be collocated with the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC).

The RCCL will maintain Tactical Control (TACON) of an SF A-team and a SAR package during conflict, and contribute to the joint PR effort. In the event of a downed aircrew the RCCL will receive Isolated Personnel Report (ISOPREP) data from the downed aircraft's aviation brigade through an automation system such as the Automated Deep Operations Coordination System (ADOCS). The RCCL members will then plan with the JRCC to recover the crew using a combination of Army and Air Force assets. The TACOPS officer can also ensure that the SPINS are written to include Army aviation with its capabilities and limitations in mind. With the experience gained here, the RCCL personnel will be ready to progress to the next stage, an RCC Minus (RCCM).

The RCCM will consist of an aviation lieutenant colonel who will be designated the Component Search and Rescue Coordinator; an aviation captain; a TACOPS officer; a senior NCO; two junior NCOs; and four lower enlisted. They will be assigned to the DOCC, where they will have the perfect view of all operations and be able to command instant fire support and Close Air Support (CAS).

Considering that the Air Force puts its RCC in its tactical headquarters, it becomes self-evident that the prime location for an Army RCC is the DOCC. The officers in the RCC should be graduates of the SERE Level C course. All officers and senior NCOs must be graduates of Personnel Recovery 101, 301 and the Joint Rescue Coordinator Course. Junior NCOs can attend PR 101. Two UH-60s equipped with an electric rescue hoist, SATCOM radio and the Pilot Locator System (PLS) will be TACON to the RCCM.

During conflict the captain, a junior NCO, an enlisted commo soldier and two rescue swimmers will deploy as a TAC to an assembly area with the two UH-60s and the A-team under TACON. In the event of a shoot-down they will assist in the planning of the pick-up and the link-up of sup-

port assets. Communications should be via SATCOM. Now that all the right people are in the right place, with the right training, the Army can progress to a real RCC.

The RCC will be commanded by the lieutenant colonel mentioned above, who will have a major as executive officer (XO) and chief of the staff. The TACOPS officer will provide technical expertise and participate in the ATO process, as mentioned earlier. The staff will consist of several company-grade aviation officers and assorted personnel to plan and execute downed-pilot recoveries using one or two SF A-teams, four AH-64s and two MH-60s, all with an habitual training relationship and under TACON. The MH-60s will have SATCOM radios, electric hoists and PLS.

When the Army is unable to pick up downed aviators the mission will be passed up to the JRCC and the Army can assist the other services in their PR missions when needed. The RCC will work out of the DOCC with a liaison to the JRCC, and a TAC forward-deployed to an assembly area



***The MH-60 is the ideal platform to begin with.***

with TACON of four MH-60s, two A-teams, eight AH-64s and an Air Force Tactical Air Control Party. This will allow for 24-hour coverage with a minimum of assets. The TACON units must be designated beforehand so that they may train together on a monthly basis.

This is what is required to meet the spirit of the requirements put forth by the various Joint Pubs on the subject. But to truly excel and fill the needs of Army CSAR, a full-time rescue company is needed.

The RCC can function the same as mentioned before, but with a Rescue Company that will consist of an aviation major as commander and an SF captain as XO and A-team commander. A warrant officer will lead the second A-team. The company will have a TACOPS officer and a safety officer, along with an instructor pilot and maintenance pilot for each type of airframe, and a squad of Navy-trained rescue swimmers. The aircraft will consist of four MH-60s and eight AH-64s. For support, the aircraft will have two crew chiefs per airframe, and enough maintenance platoon personnel to support itself from a tactical assembly area. Communications and digital connectivity should be provided through SATCOM to provide over-the-horizon communication.

## Conclusion

The overall problem of CSAR comes down to units and individuals trying to fill the vacuum, caused by need, with programs that are not properly resourced or sustainable. For any program to really work and stand the test of time and combat, it must have full-time, dedicated, trained personnel using the best of equipment. No one believes that it will be easy or cheap. But it is what is required — by doctrine and conscience.



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