

Did you know?

Feb. 16, 1973: A C-141 crew flew 20 former POWs, from Clark AB, Philippines to Hickam AFB, Hawaii, in Operation Homecoming.

Source: www.afnews.af.mil

Airlift DISPATCH

Vol. 39, No. 5

Friday, February 11, 2000

Charleston AFB, SC

Charleston facts

In Calendar Year 1999, 1,189 Charleston members were deployed and 2,326 tons of cargo was transported.



Source: Charleston fact sheet

Charleston, Hurlburt team up for training

By Tracy Velino
437 AW Public Affairs

A Special Operations MH-53 Pave Low Helicopter was here Tuesday and Wednesday for a unique training mission with the C-17 Globemaster III.

Helicopter maintenance personnel from the 16th Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Fla., brought the Pave Low here to practice loading it into the cargo hold of the C-17. Loadmasters from the 437th and 315th Airlift Wings worked with the maintainers for two days of hands-on training.

"The MH-53 is used to deliver our customers, either Special Forces or the Navy Seals, into their objective areas," said Col. Dave Scott, commander of the 16 SOW.

Airlift is essential for missions overseas, said Scott. "We need to

See MH-53, page 2



Senior Airman Michael Duhe

Loadmasters from Charleston AFB and helicopter maintainers from Hurlburt Field, Fla., load a MH-53 Pave Low Helicopter onto a C-17 Globemaster III during training here Tuesday. The C-17 is considered a perfect airlift

platform for Special Operations helicopters and other equipment because of its ability to easily load and carry heavy cargo, land on short, unimproved airfields and because of its unique ground-handling capabilities.

Two 16 AS flight engineers receive Airman's Medal

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437 AW Public Affairs

Getting into the base's record books is something members of the 16th Airlift Squadron have no problem doing. They've amassed the longest safety record in Air Force history—more than 917,000 mishap-free flying hours on many historic and heroic missions in the C-141 Starlifter.

But what many people do not know is that they are also the only squadron on base that has two airmen who received the Airman's Medal in 1999 for heroism, a feat rarely accomplished.

If you ask C-141 flight engineers Tech. Sgt. James Morrison II and Staff Sgt. Andreas Wesely they'll tell you they didn't do anything special and were instinctively reacting to a bad situation,

based on some good Air Force training.

The deed that earned Morrison the Air Force's Pitsenbarger Award, USO Airmen of the Year and the Airman's Medal occurred June 12, 1998 while he was on a Special Operations Low Level II mission with 91 other people.

A phosphorous flare was accidentally ignited under an assault vehicle engine, loaded with fuel and ammunition on board. As the Army troops scattered, Morrison grabbed a fire extinguisher and knocked the flare out from underneath the vehicle, saving the aircraft and the people on board.

The flare extinguished shortly afterwards.

"While the flare was burning underneath the vehicle, you could see the flames come around the sides of the ve-

hicle," said Morrison about the flare which burned at 2,900 degrees centigrade in the "blacked out" cargo compartment.

"Inside the vehicle was an Army soldier who was trying to keep from getting burned. After we landed he came up to me and said that I would always be a "HOOAH's little buddy." An honor among warriors that Morrison will cherish forever.

"The whole sequence of events was as though it was an orchestrated ballet and each crew member did their job as they were suppose to and as trained," Morrison added. "A favorite saying of our commander is that my actions broke the lethal chain of events that prevented a catastrophe."

For Wesely, the feat was equally impressive. He was heading to school at 6:30 p.m.

on Feb. 24 when he noticed a tractor trailer overturned near the Summerville exit off Interstate 26 east.

"I must have gotten there a few seconds after it happened. I parked my car and ran up to a couple of on-lookers and asked if there was anybody still inside and they said there was," Wesely said. At that point, his years of Air Force and civilian Emergency Medical Training took over and he crawled into the twisted wreck, finding the truck cab upside down with the driver pinned in the back of the cab, half inside and outside the cab.

"Although I didn't see any immediate danger, I started to smell fuel. I was surprised to find the driver not cut into two pieces based on how his body was pinned to the ground and even more amazing was that he was still conscious,"

Wesely said. "I assessed his medical condition and found he could feel his legs, move his hands indicating no serious signs of paralysis. He did have some bad lacerations."

The fire department arrived and decided to shore up the truck while Wesely remained in the truck cab, providing vital signs and comforting the injured truck driver.

It took emergency officials five and half hours to shore up the truck and remove the injured driver, who survived his injuries. The injured driver was flown by helicopter to the Medical University of South Carolina.

Morrison and Wesely said what they did didn't sink in until after the event was over. Wesely said, "I guess it wasn't until it was all over that the shock of what could have happened sunk in."