

39 RESCUE SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

39 Air Rescue Squadron constituted, 17 Oct 1952

Activated, 14 Nov 1952

Inactivated, 24 Nov 1957

Redesignated 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, and activated, 16 Jan 1967

Organized, 18 Jan 1967

Inactivated, 30 Apr 1972

Redesignated 39 Air Rescue Squadron, 10 Oct 1990

Activated, 1 Jan 1992

Redesignated 39 Rescue Squadron, 1 Feb 1993

Inactivated, 1 Aug 1994

Activated in the Reserve, 15 Apr 1997

STATIONS

Ashiya AB, Japan, 14 Nov 1952-24 Nov 1957

Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, 18 Jan 1967

Tuy Hoa AB, South Vietnam, 8 Jun 1967

Cam Ranh Bay AB, South Vietnam, 16 Sep 1970-30 Apr 1972

Misawa AB, Japan, 1 Jan 1992-1 Aug 1994

Patrick AFB, FL, 15 Apr 1997

ASSIGNMENTS

3 Air Rescue Group, 14 Nov 1952

2 Air Rescue Group, 18 Jun-24 Nov 1957
3 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, 18 Jan 1967-30 Apr 1972
Air Rescue Service, 1 Jan 1992
432 Operations Group, 1 Feb 1993-1 Aug 1994
920 Rescue Group, 15 Apr 1997

WEAPON SYSTEMS

SA-16, SC-47
SH-19, 1952-1957
HC-130, 1967-1972
HH-60, 1992-1994
HC-130, 1997

COMMANDERS

Maj John T. O'Donnell, 14 Nov 1952
Lt Col James K. Briggs, Apr 1953
Maj Roy E. Friedrich, 6 Apr 1954
Lt Col James P. Ferrell, 17 Oct 1954-24 Nov 1957
Lt Col Manyard R. Rhoades, 18 Jan 1967
Col Charles W. Marshall, 3 Jun 1967
Lt Col Marion L. Costello, 30 Apr 1968
Lt Col Charles E. Thacker, Jr., 1 Jun 1968
Lt Col James R. Wesley, 10 Jun 1968
Lt Col Noble L. Webster, Jr., 29 May 1969
Lt Col James V. Prewett, 3 Oct 1969
Lt Col Sidney M. Spilseth, by Jan 1971
Lt Col Irvin L. Klingenberg, Jr., 19 Jun 1971
Maj Arthur T. Provencio, Mar-c. Apr 1972
Lt Col Lee A. Meador, 1992
Lt Col James R. Schumacher, 29 Jul 1993-unkn
Unkn, 15 Apr-12 Jul 1997
Lt Col Lebo S. Centanni, Jr., 13 Jul 1997
Lt Col Jeff D. Hannold

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Korea
Korea Summer-Fall 1952
Third Korean Winter
Korea Summer 1953

Vietnam
Vietnam Air Offensive
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II
Vietnam Air/Ground
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV
Tet 69/Counteroffensive
Vietnam Summer-Fall 1969
Vietnam Winter-Spring 1970
Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Southwest Monsoon
Commando Hunt V
Commando Hunt VI
Commando Hunt VII
Vietnam Ceasefire

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished/Presidential Unit Citations
Korea, 1 May-27 Jul 1953
Vietnam, 1 Jul 1967-31 Jan 1969
Vietnam, 1 Feb 1969-30 Apr 1970
Vietnam, 1 May 1970-31 Mar 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Oct 1992-1 Aug 1994
1 Sep 1997-31 Aug 1999

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation
[14 Nov 1952]-27 Jul 1953

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm
18 Jan 1967-30 Apr 1972

EMBLEM



39 Air Rescue Squadron emblem



39 Rescue Squadron emblem: Gray, issuant from dexter base a demi-globe azure, gridline bendwise sinister Argent, bearing at the pole a sword bendwise or hilted Sable superimposed by an escutcheon bendwise blazoned: paly of nine Argent and Gules, a chief Azure charged with three mullets of the first, garnished Gold; beneath an eagle alighting bendwise sinister black, head, tail and wing garnished white, beak, feet, and eye yellow, all between an arc to dexter chief of a decrescent between two mullets and an arc to sinister base of five mullets gold all within a diminished bordure of the last. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Blue and yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. yellow refer to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The shield and sword represent downed combat personnel. The globe suggests the Squadron's mission of worldwide rescue operations. The eagle symbolizes the personnel of the Squadron and their skill and dedication to global rescue operations under combat conditions. The crescent moon reflects the unit's ability for day or night rescue operations. The stars denote the other Air Rescue Squadrons. (Approved, 12 Mar

1992)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Search, rescue, and escort missions in Japan and Korea during and following the Korean War. Search, rescue, and recovery missions in Southeast Asia, Jan 1967-Apr 1972; missions included refueling rescue helicopters and performing airborne command, control, and communications functions during combat rescue operations. Search and rescue in and around Japan, 1992-1994. Trained for combat search and rescue, performed search and rescue missions, and refueled rescue helicopters, 1997.

39 arrs lost hh43 62-4510 on 20 Sep 1965 to ground fire, Vinh, North Vietnam, 1 KIA

22 Feb 57 A C-124 with 155 persons aboard crashed on a sandbar in the Han River, 12 miles northeast of Kimpo Airfield, near Seoul, Korea. The 39 AR Squadron rescued 26 survivors, and other Army and Air Force units recovered an additional 111 persons.

17 Mar 57 In the Philippines a plane carrying President Ramon Magsaysay and a party of 26 persons crashed near Cebu City. The 31st AR Squadron participated in the ensuing SAR mission. Only one person survived.

When it absorbed assets of the 39 ARRS, Detachment 4 of the 3rd ARRG temporarily became the largest local base rescue unit in the world until 8 July 1972, when it was redesignated the 56th ARRS. Air Rescue forces were further streamlined on 20 August 1972 with the 3rd ARRG, plus the 37th, 40th and 56th squadrons assigned to the 41st ARRW at Hickam AFB, Hawaii. Some HH-43s were assigned to local base rescue duty in the U.S., while others went to the Royal Thai Air Force to fulfill military assistance agreements.

Three more HC-130s reached Udorn in late June 1966 and became Detachment 1, 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron on July 4. Although attached to the Da Nang-based squadron, this detachment reported directly to the Commander, 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group. This initial complement of five HC-130s comprised the skeleton force that, on January 16, 1967, became the 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

On January 16, 1967, the six HC-130s at Udorn, formerly Detachment 1 of the 37th Air Rescue Squadron at Da Nang, became the 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. Concurrently, Detachment 2, 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, was designated and organized at Udorn to perform recovery missions in Laos and North Vietnam. In March 1968, Detachment 2 became the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

Lockheed delivered the first modified aircraft, redesignated the HC-130P, to the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service on November 18, 1966. Five more HC-130Ps were available by the end of the year with three additional airframes delivered in January 1967 and two more that

spring. Beginning on November 7, 1966, rescue crews reported to the 48th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, to be trained in refueling techniques. It was there, on December 14, 1966, that the first inflight transfer of fuel between an HC-130P and an HH-3E occurred.¹⁴ Even as crews trained at Eglin, HC-130Ps were being flown to Southeast Asia to replace HC-130Hs in the 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron which had been relocated from Udorn to Tuy Hoa Air Base, South Vietnam on June 8, 1967.

In the summer of 1969 the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service's strength in Southeast Asia peaked with a high of seventy-one rescue aircraft operating in four squadrons under the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group. The 37th and 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadrons, at Da Nang and Udorn respectively, were responsible for aircrew recoveries over North and South Vietnam as well as Laos. The 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron had its headquarters at Tan Son Nhut. With detachments at fourteen bases throughout South Vietnam and Thailand, they were responsible for local base rescue with aircrew recovery as a secondary mission. Finally, the 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron operated eleven HC-130Ps from its base at Tuy Hoa.

On September 16, 1970, the 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron's eleven HC-130Ps moved from Tuy Hoa to Cam Ranh Air Base, Vietnam. The relatively short distance of the move (only 70 miles down the coast) had no effect on the airborne mission control and refueling functions of the HC-130Ps. This squadron continued to keep three aircraft on alert (one airborne alert from dawn to midday, replaced by a second aircraft from midday to dusk, with a third HC-130P on ground alert twenty-four hours a day) at Cam Ranh and three on alert at Udorn as well. The movement of the 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron was the only relocation of a major rescue unit in Southeast Asia during 1970. On January 1, 1971, the following rescue units were in Vietnam and Thailand: Headquarters, 3 ARRGp, Tan Son Nhut Afd, RVN; Joint Rescue Control Center, Tan Son Nhut Afd, RVN; Operating Location A, Son Tra AB, RVN; Operating Location B, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand; Headquarters, 37th ARRSq, Da Nang AB, RVN; Headquarters, 38th ARRSq, Tan Son Nhut Afd, RVN; Det 1, 38th ARRSq, Phan Rang AB, RVN; Det 3, 38th ARRSq, Ubon RTAFB, Thailand; Det 4, 38th ARRSq, Korat RTAFB, Thailand; Det 5, 38th ARRSq, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand; Det 6, 38th ARRSq, Bien Hoa AB, RVN; Det 7, 38th ARRSq, Da Nang AB, RVN; Det 9, 38th ARRSq, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand; Det 12, 38th ARRSq, Utapao Royal Thai Naval Air Base, Thailand; Det 13, 38th ARRSq, Phu Cat AB, RVN; Det 14, 38th ARRSq, Tan Son Nhut Afd, RVN; Headquarters, 39 ARRSq, Cam Ranh AB, RVN; Headquarters, 40th ARRSq, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand; Det 1, 40th ARRSq, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand.

In March the 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron moved from Cam Ranh Air Base, Vietnam, to Korat Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand. During the move all HC-130P missions were flown from their operating location at Udorn. After that operating location closed on March 17, all King missions were flown out of Korat. On April 1 the 39 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron was dissolved and the aircraft and men with the King mission became, temporarily, part of local base rescue Detachment 4, 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group at Korat.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.