



## INTRODUCTION TO PERSONNEL RECOVERY

Last Updated: 18 March 2020

### OVERVIEW AND DEFINITIONS

Our adversaries clearly understand there is great intelligence and propaganda value to be leveraged from captured Americans that can influence our national and political will and negatively impact our strategic objectives. For these reasons, the Air Force maintains a robust and well trained force to locate and recover personnel who have become “isolated” from friendly forces. Personnel recovery (PR) is an overarching term that describes this process and the capability it represents. It is a term that should be clearly defined before understanding Air Force doctrine on PR.

PR is defined as “the sum of military, diplomatic, and civil efforts to prepare for and execute the recovery and reintegration of isolated personnel” (Joint Publication [JP] 3-50, [Personnel Recovery](#)<sup>1</sup>). Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3270.01C, [Personnel Recovery](#) and Presidential Policy Directive 30, [Directive on United States Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts](#), and Executive Order 13698, [Hostage Recovery Activities](#), expand PR responsibilities to: prevent, plan for, and coordinate a response to isolating events to include all US Government (USG) departments and agencies. [JP 3-50](#)<sup>2</sup> defines isolated personnel (IP) as, “US Military, Department of Defense (DOD) civilians, and DOD contracted personnel and others designated by the President or Secretary of Defense (SecDef), who are separated from their unit or agency, as an individual or group, while participating in a US-sponsored military activity or mission and who are, or may be, in a situation where they must survive, evade, resist, or escape. A sponsored military activity includes leave status for military and civilians. Contractors authorized to accompany the force (CAAF), who are on leave, are allowed to be on leave based on the contracting company’s statement of how they run their company and what benefits are provided to their employees. This statement is approved by the government, outside of any individual contract.”

The PR enterprise consists of adaptive, scalable networks of synchronized capabilities, which are scaled and scoped, to prevent, prepare for, and respond to isolation events. It is a human network, regionally postured, but globally networked and flexible, supported

<sup>1</sup> Common access card required.

<sup>2</sup> Common access card required.

by persistent, collaborative information sharing capabilities. The PR enterprise enhances coordination between command centers as part of the larger operational DOD and interagency network of entities prosecuting the various phases of military operations. The PR enterprise includes the elements of host nation (HN), other USG departments and agencies, other governments, and civilian organizations that can contribute in any manner to the success of the recovery of IP. Thus PR is an effort to recover people engaged in DOD activities that have become lost or separated in an environment in which they must take extraordinary action to survive and return to friendly control. The President or SecDef may designate other personnel, who might not fully meet the original criteria (e.g., individuals of strategic or political value; members of coalition and allied partners during armed conflict; etc.), allowing DOD resources to be made available to locate and recover them.

## **AIR FORCE PERSONNEL RECOVERY PHILOSOPHY**

The DOD mandates each Service to plan and conduct PR in support of its own operations. Although Airmen may place natural emphasis on the recovery of fellow Airmen, Air Force PR philosophy is based on the assumption that rescue forces are prepared to recover any IP any time and any place. The successful recovery of IP is an intangible force multiplier that transcends the tactical to the operational and strategic [levels of warfare](#). Additionally, rescue is integral to US operations and should be considered across the competition continuum. It is a key element in sustaining the morale, cohesion, and fighting capability of friendly forces. It preserves critical combat resources and influences the course of national and international politics by denying adversaries the opportunity to exploit the intelligence and propaganda value of captured personnel.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Recent operations and events have proven that IP are not always limited to combatants deep behind enemy lines or even on a battlefield. Non-state actors such as pirates and international terrorists can be embedded in urban areas and behind less well-defined lines of battle. Areas previously thought of as “safe” (e.g. “behind the lines”) are

### **Code of the Air Rescue Man**

It is my duty, as a member of the Air Rescue Service, to save life and aid the injured.  
I will be prepared at all times to perform my assigned duties quickly and efficiently,  
placing these duties before personal desires and comforts.  
These things I do, THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE.

**Brig Gen Richard T. Kight**  
**Commander, Air Rescue Service, 1 December 1946—8 July 1952**

becoming more dangerous, making possible diplomatic and civil options more difficult and military options more complex and risky.

## **MISSION**

While Air Force PR missions can collaterally recover IP from any Service, each Service component is committed to the recovery of their own members but may be called as the most capable/feasible force to recover **any** captured, missing, or IP from uncertain or hostile environments and denied areas.

The Air Force conducts global PR operations including theater-wide combat and civil search and rescue (SAR), in coordination with the other military Services, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and DOD components. The Air Force conducts PR using the fastest and most effective means to recover IP. Air Force PR forces deploy to recover personnel or equipment with specially outfitted aircraft/vehicles, specially trained aircrews and ground recovery teams with PR support personnel and capabilities in response to geographic [combatant commander](#) (CCDR) taskings.

Air Force PR capability has three critical components: dedicated PR forces, commanders and staffs trained to manage PR programs and missions, and Airmen who are trained and equipped for potential isolation and recovery. Furthermore, the USG employs three options for recovery of IP: military, diplomatic, and civil. While the diplomatic and civil options are outside the purview of the Air Force, it can be called upon to support those options. This document focuses on how it plans for and executes the military option. Specifically, it codifies the Air Force's operational level doctrine on PR and how Air Force PR capability complements joint PR concepts.

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